THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

An Illustrated Weekly Magazine
Founded Aº Dº 1728 by Benj. Franklin

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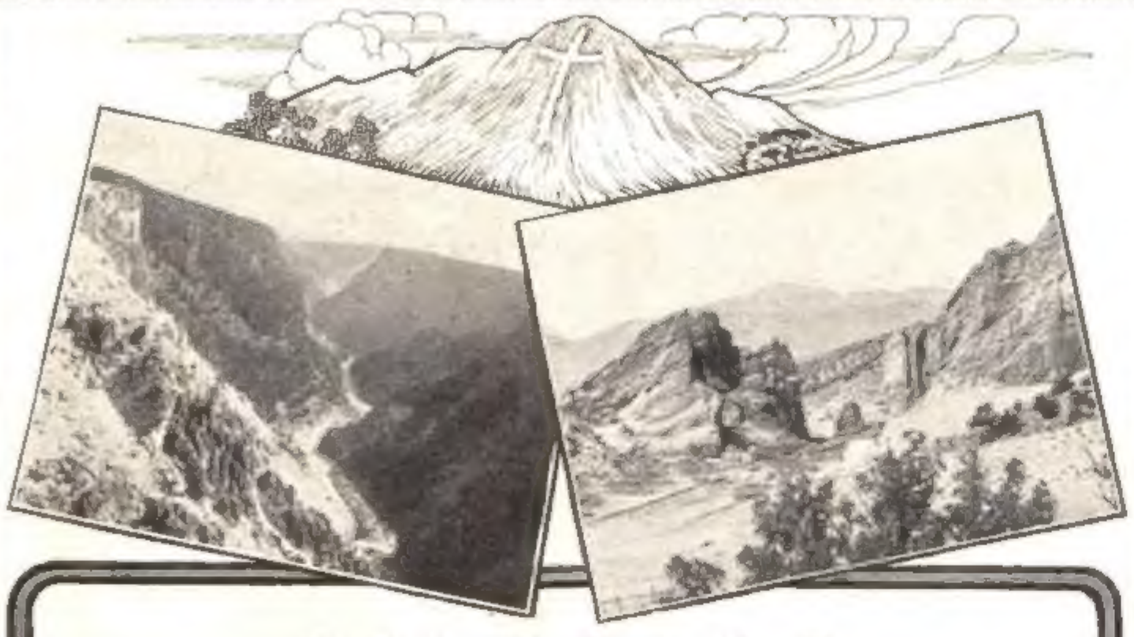
THE NOOSE—By Hamlin Garland

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA



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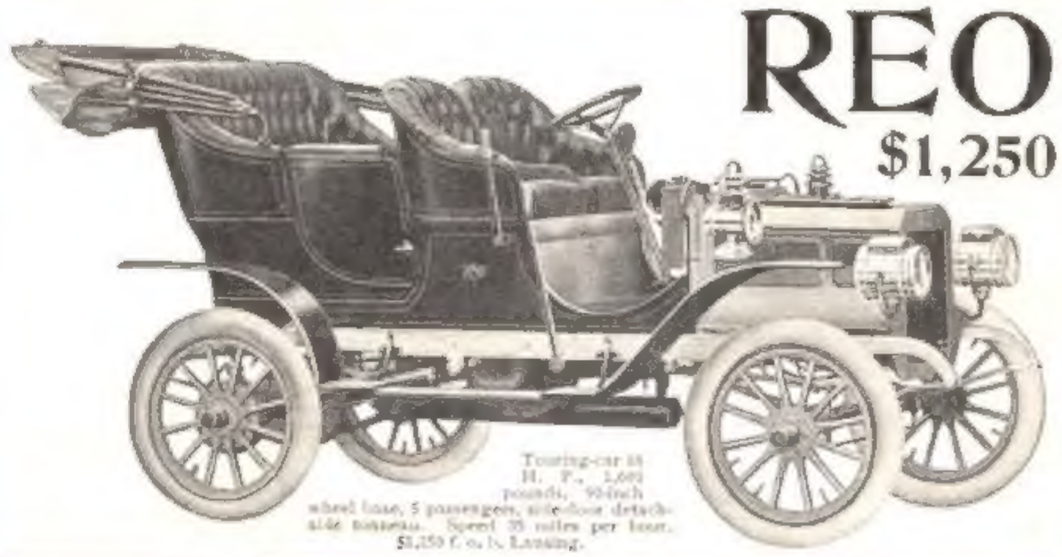

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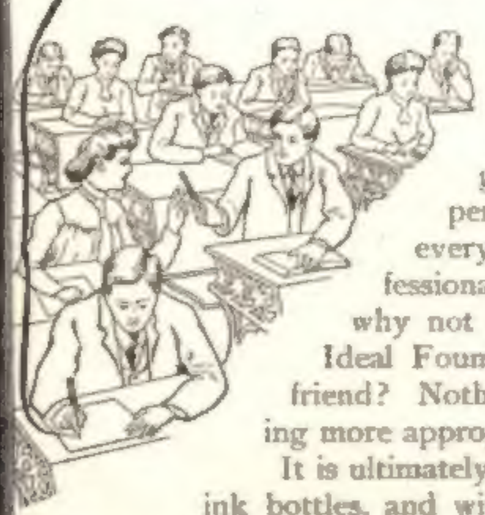

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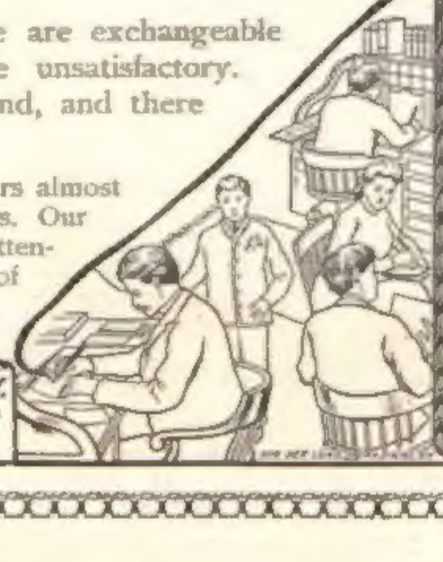

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THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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A Brief History

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST is the oldest journal of any kind that is issued today from the American press. Its history may be traced back in a continuous, unbroken line to the days when young Benjamin Franklin edited and printed the old Pennsylvania Gazette. In nearly one hundred and eighty years there has been hardly a week—save only while the British army held Philadelphia and patriotic printers were in exile—when the magazine has not been issued.

During Christmas week, 1728, Samuel Keimer began its publication under the title of the Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania Gazette. In less than a year he sold it to Benjamin Franklin, who, on October 2, 1729, issued the first copy under the name of the Pennsylvania Gazette. Franklin sold his share in the magazine to David Hall, his partner, in 1765. In 1805 the grandson of David Hall became its publisher. When he died, in 1821, his partner, Samuel C. Atkinson, formed an alliance with Charles Alexander, and in the summer of that year they changed the title of the Gazette to THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.

An Accidental Plutocrat

It was Mr. Doty who became a plutocrat. He hated plutocrats and said so, shaking a pudgy finger under Mr. Hugg's nose. Mr. Hugg happened to be wallowing in money.

Then there were the Vanstarvesynts, who had forefathers and ancestry to burn, and turned up their aristocratic noses at the Huggs and the Dotys—dealers in ginghams, lard, thread, nutmegs, and the like. Of course there were the younger Huggs and Dotys and Vanstarvesynts—fine looking girls and stalwart young men. Marooned on a desert island the fun begins. Doty has all the things the others need; so he becomes a plutocrat. But Hugg is a high financier, and he shows Doty what high finance can do without finances. And Mrs. Doty would sell her soul to get into the Vanstarvesynt social set. So there are complications a-plenty; especially among the younger set, who proceed to fall in love without taking their parents into consideration. The Accidental Plutocrat is by George Randolph Chester, and there is a laugh in every line and joy in every paragraph.

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In the first place we find that the Mutual Life is still the largest and staunchest Life Insurance Company in the world. Without defending or in the least belittling the abuses and extravagances recently brought to light, everybody should keep in mind the fact that the solvency of this Company has not for a moment been affected thereby. Concerning the work of the finance committee which has been attacked in the press, this Company's auditing committee consisting of Messrs. Truesdale, Auchincloss, Fish and Dixon stated on February 15th, 1906:

> *"The Committee certify that the investments of the Company are of the highest order and well selected," and "have found the valuation given safe and conservative, in many instances less than the market value and in none in excess of such value."*

In the next place, extravagance has been stopped, and those responsible for it have gone; a new management has been installed, and retrenchments have been effected that have already saved vast sums of money and will save much more as time goes on. Legislative reforms have likewise been anticipated, and the Company is now as sound at the circumference as it always has been at the core.

In the next place, the ending of the first quarter presents an excellent opportunity for comparing this year with last.

> *The amount paid policy holders is $9,608,436.50, an increase of $1,070,835.26. The receipts for premiums were $15,082,484.57, a decrease of $857,995.29 for the period. This is a shrinkage of less than 5½ per cent. The amount paid for expenses was $2,935,552.44, a reduction of $1,547,279.36.*

This remarkable showing is a good thing to be kept in mind by everybody—those now insured in the Mutual Life, and those who should be. It cannot be accounted for by the smaller amount of new business written. Of the saving for the quarter, the sum of $390,961.52 is in items not connected with the obtaining of new business.

In the next place we find that this Company is doing business—more business than any other company in the world with one exception. Far from being paralyzed or demoralized it is forging right ahead. Policies by the hundred are being written each day; honest trustees, keenly alert, are directing its affairs; faithful and experienced men are doing its intricate work; loyal agents are explaining its advantages and discriminating people are obtaining its protection.

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THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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THE NOOSE

The Kettle Hole Ranch

A Story of Love and the Alien

By HAMLIN GARLAND

I

THE Kettle Hole Ranch house faces a wide, treeless valley and is backed by an equally bare hill. To the west the purple peaks of the Rampart Range are visible. It is a group of ramshackle and dispersed cabins—not Western enough to be picturesque, and so far from being Eastern as to lack cleanliness or even comfort, and the young Englishman who rode over the hill one sunset was bitterly disappointed in the "whole plant."

"I shall stay here but one night," said he as he entered the untidy house.

He stayed five years, and the cause of this change of mind lay in the person of Fan Blondell, the daughter of the old man who owned the ranch and to whom young Lester had been sent to "learn the business" of cattle-raising.

Fan was only seventeen at this time, but in the full flower of her physical perfection. Lithe, full-bosomed and ruddy, she radiated a powerful and subtle charm. She had the face of a child—happy-tempered and pure—but every movement of her body appealed with dangerous directness to the sickly young Englishman who had never known an hour of the abounding joy of life which had been hers from the cradle. Enslaved to her at the first glance, he resolved to win her love.

His desire knew no law in affairs of this kind, but his first encounter with Blondell put a check to the dark plans he had formed—for the rancher had the bearing of an aged, moth-eaten, but dangerous old bear. His voice was a rumble, his teeth were broken fangs, and his hands resembled the paws of a gorilla. Like so many of those Colorado ranchers of the early days, he was a Missourian, and his wife, big, fat, worried and complaining, was a Kentuckian. Neither of them had any fear of dirt, and Fan had grown up not merely unkempt, but smudgy. Her gown was greasy, her shoes untied, and yet, strange to say, this carelessness exercised a subduing charm over Lester, who was fastidious to the point of wasting precious hours in filling his boots with "trees" and folding his neckties. The girl's slovenly habits of dress indicated, to his mind, a similar recklessness as to her moral habits, and it sometimes happens that men of his stamp come to find a fascination in the elemental in human life which the orderly no longer possess.

Lester, we may explain, was a "remittance man"—a youth sent to America by his family on the pretense of learning to raise cattle, but in reality to get him out of the way. He was not a bad man; on the contrary, he was in most ways a gentleman and a man of some reading—but he lacked initiative, even in his villainy. Blondell at once called him "a lazy hound"—provoked thereto by Lester's slowness of toilet of a morning, and had it not been for Fan—backed by the fifty dollars a month which Lester was paying for "instruction"—he would have been "booted off the place."

Fan laughed at her father. "You better go slow; George Adelbert is heeled."

Blondell snorted. "Heeled! He couldn't unlimber his gun inside of fifteen minutes."

"Well, he can ride."

The old man softened a little. "Yes, he can ride, and he don't complain once he gets mounted, but he carries 'pajammys' in his saddle-bags and a tooth-brush on his slicker; hanged if he don't use it, too!"

"That's what I like about him," she answered defiantly. "We're all so blamed careless about the way we live. I wish he'd jack us all up a bit."

The Rancher had the Bearing of an Aged, Moth-Eaten, but Dangerous Old Bear

Truly Fan was under conviction, brought to a realization of her slouchiness by Lester's care of his own room as well as by his lofty manners. She no longer wore her dress open at the throat, and she kept her yellow hair brushed, trying hard to make each meal a little less like a pig's swilling. She knew how things ought to be done, a little, for at "The Gold Fish Ranch" and at Starr Baker's everything was spick and span (Mrs. Baker especially was a careful and energetic housekeeper), but to keep to this higher level every day was too great an effort even for a girl in love. She dropped back, now and again, weary and disheartened.

It was her mating-time. She leaned to Lester from the first glance. The strangeness of his accent, his reference to things afar off, to London and Paris, appealed to her in the same way in which poetry moved her—dimly, vaguely—but his hands, his eyes, his tender, low-toned voice won her heart. She hovered about him when he was at home, careless of the comments of the other men, ignoring the caustic "slatting" of her mother. She had determined to win him, no matter what the father might say—for to her all men were of the same social level and she as good as the best. Indeed, she knew no other world than the plains of Colorado, for she was born in the little dugout which still remained a part of the kitchen. The conventions of cities did not count with her.

She was already aware of her power, too, and walked among the rough men of her acquaintance with the step of an Amazonian queen, unafraid, unabashed. She was not in awe of Lester; on the contrary, her love for him was curiously mingled with a certain sisterly, almost maternal, pity; he was so easily "flustered." He was, in a certain sense, on her hands like an invalid.

She soon learned that he was wax beneath her palm—that the touch of a finger on his arm made him uneasy of eye and trembling of limb. It amused her to experiment with him—to command him, to demand speech of him when he was most angry and disgusted with the life he was living. That he despised her father and mother she did not know, but that he was sick of the cowboys and their "clack" she did know, and she understood quite as well as if he had already told her that she alone kept him from returning at once to Denver to try some other manner of earning a living. This realization gave her pride and joy.

She had but one jealousy—he admired and trusted Mrs. Baker and occasionally rode over there to talk with her—and Fan could not understand that he sought intellectual refuge from the mental squalor of the Blondells, but she perceived a difference in his glance on his return. Mrs. Baker, being a keen-sighted, practical little woman, soon fell upon the plainest kind of speech with the young Englishman.

"This is no place for you," she defiantly said. "The rest of us are all more or less born to the plains and farm-life—but you're not;

you're just 'sagging'—that's all. You're getting deeper into the slough all the time."

"Quite right," he answered, "but I don't know what else I can do. I have no trade—I know nothing of any art or profession, and my brother is quite content to pay my way so long as he thinks I'm on a ranch, and in the way of learning the business."

She, with her clear eyes searching his soul, replied: "The longer you stay the more difficult it will be to break away. Don't you see that? You're in danger of being fastened here forever."

He knew what she meant, and his thin face flushed. "I know it and I am going to ask Starr to give me a place here with you, and I'm about to write my brother stating full reasons for the change. He might advance me enough to buy into Starr's herd."

She considered this. "I'll take the matter up with Starr," she replied, after a pause. "Meanwhile, you can come over and stay as a visitor as long as you please—but don't bring Fan," she added sharply. "I can't stand slatterns, and you must cut loose from her once for all."

Again he flushed. "I understand—but it isn't easy. Fan has been mighty good to me—life would have been intolerable over there but for her."

"I should think life would have been intolerable *with* her," Mrs. Baker answered with darkening brow, and then they talked of other things till he rose to ride away.

He headed his horse homeward, fully resolved to give notice of removal—but he did not. On the contrary, he lost himself to Fan. The girl, glowing with love and anger and at the very climax of her animal beauty, developed that night a subtlety of approach, a method of attack which baffled, and in the end overpowered him. She was adroit enough to make no mention of her rivals; she merely set herself to cause his committal, to bend him to her side. As the romping girl she played round him, indifferent to the warning glances of her mother, her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing, till the man he was, the life he had lived, the wishes of his brother, were fused and lost in the blind passion of the present. "This glorious, glowing creature can be mine—what does all the rest matter?" was his final word of renunciation.

In this mood he took her to his arms, in this madness he told her of his love, committing himself into her hands—declining into her life, and in the end requested of her parents the honor of their daughter's hand.

Mrs. Blondell wept a tear or two and weakly gave her consent, but the old ranchman thundered and lightened. "What can you do for my girl?" he demanded. "As I understand it, you haven't a cent—the very clothes you've got on your back are paid for by somebody else! What right have you to come to me with such a proposal?"

To all this Lester, surprised and disconcerted, could but meekly answer that he hoped soon to buy a ranch of his own—that his brother had promised to "set him up" as soon as he had mastered the business.

Blondell opened his jaws to roar again when Fan interposed, and taking a clutch in his shaggy beard said calmly: "Now, Dad, you hush! George Adelbert and I have made it all up and you better fall in gracefully. It won't do you any good to paw the dirt and beller."

Lester grew sick for a moment as he realized the temper of the family into which he was about to marry, but when Fan, turning with a gay laugh, put her round, smooth arm about his neck, the rosy cloud closed over his head again.

"Pull up, Dell. It's No Use"

II

BLONDELL was silenced, but not convinced. A penniless son-in-law was not to his liking Fan was his only child, and the big ranch over which he presided was worth sixty thousand dollars. What right had this lazy Englishman to come in and marry its heiress? The more he thought about it the angrier he grew, and when he came in the following night he broke forth.

"See here, mister, I reckon you better get ready and pull out. I'm not going to have you for a son-in-law, not this season. The man that marries my Fan has got to have *sabe* enough to round up a flock of goats—and wit enough to get up in the morning. So you better vamoose tomorrow."

Lester received his sentence in silence. At the moment he was glad of it. He turned on his heel and went to packing with more haste, with greater skill, than he had ever displayed in any enterprise hitherto. His hurry arose from a species of desperation. "If I can only get out of the house!" was his inward cry.

"Why pack up?" he suddenly asked himself. "What do they matter—these boots and shirts and books?" He caught a few pictures from the wall and stuffed them into his pockets, and was about to plunge out into the dusk when Fan entered the room and stood looking at him with ominous intentness.

She was no longer the laughing, romping girl, but the woman with alert eye and tightly-closed lips. "What are you doing, Dell?"

"Your father has ordered me to leave the ranch," he answered, "and so I'm going."

"No you're not! I don't care what he has ordered! You're not going"—she came up and put her arms about his neck—"not without me." And feeling her claim to pity he took her in his arms and tenderly pressed her cheek upon his bosom. Then she began to weep. "I can't live without you, Dell," she moaned.

He drew her closer, a wave of tenderness rising in his heart. "I'll be lonely without you, Fan—but your father is right. I am too poor—we have no home——"

"What does that matter?" she asked. "I wouldn't marry you for any amount of *money!* And I know you don't care for this old ranch—*I'll* be glad to get shut of it. I'll go with you, and we'll make a home somewhere else." Then her mood changed. Her face and voice hardened. She pushed herself away from him. "No, I won't! I'll stay here and so shall you! Dad can't boss me, and I won't let him run you out. Come and face him up with me."

So, leading him, she returned to the kitchen where Blondell, alone with his wife, was eating supper, his elbows on the table, his hair unkempt, his face glowering, a glooming contrast to his radiant and splendid daughter who faced him fearlessly. "Dad, what do you mean by talking this way to George Adelbert? He's going to stay and I'm going to stay, and you're going to be decent about it, for I'm going to marry him."

"No you're not!" he blurted out.

"Well, I am!" She drew nearer and with her hands on the table looked down into his wind-worn face and dim eyes. "I say you've got to be decent. Do you understand?" Her body was as lithe, as beautiful, as that of a tigress as she leaned thus, and an unalterable resolution blazed in her eyes as she went on, a deeper significance coming into her voice: "Furthermore, I'm as good as married to him right now, and I don't care who knows it."

The old man's head lifted with a jerk and he looked at her with mingled fear and fury. "What do you mean?"

"Anything you want to have it mean," she replied. "You drive him out and you drive me out—that's what I mean."

Blondell saw in her face the look of the woman who is willing to assume any guilt, any shame for her lover, and, dropping his eyes before her gaze, growled a curse and left the room.

Fan turned to her lover with a ringing, boyish laugh:

"It's all right, Dell; he's surrendered!"

III

LESTER passed the month before his marriage in alternating uplifts and depressions, and the worst of it lay in the fact that his moments of exaltation were sensual—of the flesh, and born of the girl's presence—while his depression came from his sane contemplation of the fate to which he was hastening. He went one day to talk it all over with Mrs. Baker, who now held a dark opinion of Fan Blondell. She frankly advised him to break the engagement and to go back to England.

"I can't do that—my dear Mrs. Baker—I am too far committed to Fan to do that. Besides, I know she would make a terrible scene. She would follow me. And besides, I am fond of her, you know. She's very beautiful, now—and she does love me, poor beggar! I wonder at it, but she does." Then he brightened up. "You know she has the carriage of a duchess—really, if she were trained a little, she would be quite presentable anywhere."

Mrs. Baker shook her head. "She's at her best this minute. Look at the mother: that's what she'll be like in a few years."

"Oh, no—not really! She's an improvement—a vast improvement—on the old people, don't you think?"

"You can't make a purse out of a sow's ear. Fan will sag right down after marriage. Mark my words. She's a slattern in her blood, and before the honeymoon is over she'll be slouching around in old slippers and her nightgown. That is plain talk, Mr. Lester, but I can't let you go into this trap with your eyes shut."

Lester went away with renewed determination to pack his belongings and bolt, but the manly streak in his blood made it impossible for him to go without some sort of explanation to her.

The other hands, who called him "George Adelbert" in mockery, were more and more contemptuous of him, and one or two were sullen, for they loved Fan and resented this "lily-fingered gent," who was to their minds "after the old man's acres." Young Compton, the son of a neighboring rancher, was most insulting, for he had himself once carried on a frank courtship with Fan—and enjoyed a brief, half-expressed engagement. He was a fine young fellow, not naturally vindictive, and he would not have uttered a word of protest had his successful rival been a man of "the States," but to give way to an English adventurer whose way was paid by his brother was a different case altogether.

Of George Adelbert's real feeling the boys, of course, knew nothing. Had they known of his hidden contempt for them they would probably have taken him out of the country at the end of a rope—but of his position with Fan they were in no doubt, for she was very frank with them. If they accused her of being "sweet on the bloody Englishman" she laughed. If they threatened his life in a jocular way she laughed again, but in a different way, and said:

"Don't make a mistake—George Adelbert is a fighter from way back East." And once, in a burst of rage, she said: "I won't have you saying such things, Lincoln Compton—I won't have it, I tell you!" No one could accuse her of disloyalty or cowardice.

In his letters home Lester had put his fiancée's best foot forward. "She's quite too good for me," he wrote to his brother. "She's young and beautiful and sole heiress of an estate twice as big as our whole family can muster. She's uncultivated, the diamond in the rough, and all that sort of thing, you understand, but she'll polish easily." He put all this down in the sardonic wish to procure some sort of settlement from his brother. He got it by return mail.

Edward was suavely congratulatory, and in closing said: "I'm deucedly glad you're off my hands just now, my boy, for I'm confoundedly hard up. You're doing the sensible thing—only don't try to bring your family home—not at present."

Lester was thrown into despairing fury by this letter, which not only cut him off from his remittances, but politely shut the paternal door in his own face as well as in the face of his bride. For the moment he had some really heroic idea of setting to work to show them what he could do. "The beggar! He squats down on the inheritance, shoves me out, and then takes on a lot of 'side' as to his superiority over me! He always was a self-sufficient ass. I'd like to punch his jaw!"

Then his rage faded out and a kind of sullen resignation came to him. What was the use? Why not submit to fate? "Everything has been against me from the start," he bitterly complained, and in this spirit he approached his wedding day.

The old man, acknowledging him as a son-in-law prospective, addressed him now with gruff kindness, and had Lester shown the slightest gain in managerial ability he would have been content—glad to share a little of his responsibility with a younger man. In his uncouth, hairy, grimy fashion Blondell was growing old and feeling it. As he said to his wife: "It's a pity that our only child couldn't have brought a real man, like Compton, into the family. There ain't a hand on the place that wouldn't 'a' been more welcome to me. What do you suppose would become of this place if it was put into this dandy's hands?"

"I don't know, pa. Fan, for all her slack ways, is a purty fair manager. She wouldn't waste it. She might let it run down, but she'd hang on to it."

"But she's a fool about that jackass."

She Sowed Her "Bids" Broadcast

"She is now," answered the mother, with cynical emphasis—which she softened by adding: "Dell ain't the kind that would try to work her."

He sighed with troubled gaze and grumbled an oath. "I don't know what to think of him! He gits me." And in that rather mournful spirit he went about his work, leaving the whole matter of the marriage festival in the hands of the women. In a dim way he still felt that haste was necessary, although Fan's face was as joyous, as careless, and as innocent as a child's. As she galloped about the country with her George Adelbert she sowed her "bids" broadcast, as if wishing all the world to share her happiness. There was nothing exclusive, or shrinking, or parsimonious in Frances Blondell.

IV

THE marriage feast was indeed an epoch-marking event in the county. It resembled a barbecue and was quite as inclusive. Distinctions of the social sort were few in Arapahoe County. Cattle-rustlers and sheep-men were debarred of course, but aside from these unfortunates practically the whole population of men, women, children and babies assembled in the Kettle Hole Ranch grove. The marriage was to be "*al fresco*," as the Limone Limerick repeated several times.

Blondell found it a hard day, for what with looking after the roasting ox and the ice and the beer he was almost too busy to say hello to his guests. Fan had contrived to get a clean shirt on him by the trick of whisking away his old one and substituting a white one in its place. He put this on without realizing how splendid it was, but rebelled flatly at the collar, and by the time the ox was well basted his shirt was subdued to a condition which left him almost at ease with himself.

Fan received the people at the door of the shack—her mother being too busy in the preparation for dinner to do more than say "Howdy?" to those who deliberately sought her out—but Fan was not embarrassed or wearied. It was her great day—she was only a little disturbed when George Adelbert fled to his room for a little relief from the strain of his position—for he lacked both her serenity of spirit and her physical health.

Once Lester would have enjoyed the action and comment of these people as characters in a play, but now the knowledge that he was about to sink to their level and be nailed there filled him with a fear and disgust which not even the radiant face and alluring body of his bride could conceal or drive out. These lumbering ranchers, these tobacco-chewing, drawling lumpkins, were they to be his companions for the rest of his life? These women with their toothless, shapeless mouths, these worn and weary mothers in home-made calico and cheap millinery, were they to be the visitors at his fireside? What kind of woman would they make of Fan?

By one o'clock the corrals were full of ponies and the sheds and yards crowded with carriages all faded by the pitiless sun and sucked dry by the never-resting wind of the plain.

Meanwhile the young women had set long tables in the back yard and covered them with food—contributed chicken, home-made biscuit, cake and pie, while the young fellows had been noisily working at constructing a "bowery" for the dance which was to follow the ceremony at three. And at last Fan raised a bugle-call for "*dinner!*" and they all came with a rush.

The feast did not last long, for every one was hungry and ate without permitting delay or distraction. Nearly all remarked on having had a very early breakfast, and they certainly showed capacity for not merely beef and beer, but

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MORTMAIN

By ARTHUR TRAIN

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IV

IT WAS cold in the train—icy cold, and in spite of his fur coat Sir Richard found himself shivering. Only his arm hanging in a splint burned with the fires of hell, as if imps with red-hot pincers were slowly tearing apart the nerves. Sir Penniston, sitting opposite, smiled encouragingly at him.

There were several people in the carriage. The lamps had been lighted and in the corner, beside a large black case, containing instruments probably, sat Jermyn. Next to him came Joyce, looking exceedingly respectable and very solemn. But the other three he did not remember to have seen before—that tall, white-whiskered man in the otter collar: he probably had been presented and Sir Richard had forgotten. Then there was a big, broad-shouldered fellow in a soft cap, and next to him a slender, white-faced youth whose chin was buried in the depths of his coat collar and whose hands were thrust deep into his pockets. The big man looked out the window occasionally and inquired the time, but the youth beside him kept his eyes fast shut and hardly moved. Had he not been sitting bolt upright Sir Richard fancied that the latter might have been taken for a corpse.

"Woxton next stop, gentlemen!" announced the guard, opening the door for an instant as the train paused at a way station. A cold blast of air followed and Mortmain's teeth chattered. It was quite dark in the compartment and he felt very weak and miserable. He could not remember getting aboard the train, but the purport of it all was unmistakable. The agonies of the morning rushed back across his memory, and his hand throbbed and twisted within the splint. He felt sick and faint and the atmosphere of the carriage seemed suffocating.

"'How much farther is it?" inquired the man in the otter collar. "We've been traveling for hours!"

"Only eight miles," answered Crisp cheerfully. "It certainly has seemed an unearthly distance."

There was a long silence punctuated only by the puffing of the engine and the shriek of the whistle. Suddenly the pale young man whimpered. The sound sent a chill to the marrow of Sir Richard's spine.

"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee——" whispered the youth. Then he fell to sobbing in the depths of his collar, but without opening his eyes.

"Come, come, my man! None of that!" cried Crisp angrily. "You're a lucky fellow! Why, your fortune is as good as made."

Mortmain shuddered.

"If thine hand offend thee——" he repeated to himself. "If thine hand offend——"

Then he became conscious of still another presence somewhere—a presence that watched him furtively, but hungrily, with eager, greedy eyes. He stared along the seats and into the crannies. Could it have been a face at the window? No, the black night rushed by steadily and blankly. And yet he could not convince himself that another face had not been there a moment before.

The train slowed up with a screeching of the brakes and came to a stop. The door was flung open; his companions hurriedly arose, and the broad-shouldered young man placed his arm protectingly about the baronet and assisted him to the platform. A fine snow was sifting down silently over the lamplit road and upon two large depot wagons standing beside the station. Again Mortmain was conscious of a presence. He glanced quickly across the platform and thought he saw a shadow spring from a rear carriage and leap into the darkness of the bushes.

"What was that?" he gasped.

But the others paid no attention, being busily engaged in deporting their cases and portmanteaus. The train started on again. Only the station-agent was left, his lantern making an opaque circle in the intense darkness of the snow-filled night.

The horses champed impatiently, and as quickly as was possible the party divided and climbed into the wagons, Crisp, the nurse and Mortmain entering the last. The doors were slammed to and they started. Still Mortmain felt convinced that they were not alone. Looking back just as they were leaving the dim lights of the station, he could have sworn that he saw the figure of a man running steadily along behind, crouching low against the road. To the south a distant glow bespoke the lights of a village, but the wagons swung sharply to the north and plunged into a wood.

A drowsiness had come over the baronet and he pressed close to the nurse, terrified and shaken by the dread of some approaching peril. This hired man seemed nearer to him than any other living soul. He cried softly, fearing to be observed, and the tears coursed down his hot cheeks and lost themselves in his furs. Now and then he would listen intently for the sound of some one running, but he could hear nothing save the crunch of the wheels and the jingle of the harness. Yet he knew that just behind them, clinging to their wheel, was pressing that mysterious figure that had leaped into the darkness beside the station.

After what seemed an hour, a bend in the road disclosed a single light not far ahead and in a few moments the wagons stopped before a high wall. The party got out and Crisp opened the gate. Mortmain stared fixedly down the road, waiting for the unbidden guest to creep swiftly into view.

"Here we are!" cried Sir Penniston. "Wait a moment until I notify the farmer."

As the surgeon hastened up the paved walk to the cottage, the wagons turned and started back at a brisk trot, like a home-going funeral procession. All the windows were dark and Mortmain clung sobbing to the nurse's arm.

"Hit's all right, sir," whispered the latter sympathetically. "Hit's all right!"

Slowly the party made their way to the porch. A light appeared in the lower windows, then the door was opened. The nurse, half-carrying the baronet, helped him into the hall and seated him upon a wooden chair. As the door closed Mortmain saw a shadow at the gate.

"Look! Look!" he cried. The warm air swallowed him up; he felt a rush of blood to his neck and face; the figures about him swayed and swam in the dim light; there was a stabbing pain in his hand and he knew no more.

He Became Conscious of Still Another Presence

When Mortmain was able once more to reappear in society he was astonished to find that the murder of Lord Russell was no longer a matter of interest or of discussion. The temporarily shocked and horrified community had apparently within a short time placidly accepted it, and, apart from occasional references in the newspapers, it was rapidly becoming a mere matter of history, taking its proper chronological place in the long list of London's unsolved mysteries. It had been given out at the time that the horrible death of his old friend had so prostrated the baronet that he had been threatened with total collapse, and had only been restored to health by remaining in bed under the constant care of a certain distinguished physician. At times Mortmain was almost inclined to believe this himself, for the ghastly night at the lonely farmhouse, his ensuing illness and slow recovery, seemed, in the full swing of the London season and contrasted with the brilliant colors of its festivities, less like actuality than a dreadful nightmare which continually obtruded itself upon his recollection. But he had assumed his place in fashionable life with the same inevitable assurance as of old, and, picking up his cards where he had left them lying face downward upon the table, had resumed the deal as if nothing had occurred.

But Sir Richard was not the same. His glass showed him to be paler than of yore, his eyes more deeply sunken, his hair touched at the edges with a ghost of white, the lines of his mouth more firmly marked. His friends jokingly told him that he was growing old. He had paid a heavy price for what he had bought, yet it was not loss of vitality, not physical shock alone that had thus aged him, but a ghastly, damning fact that never left him for an instant, waking or sleeping: *the fact that the man had died.* They had not told him at first—it might have affected his cure. The result upon his spiritual being when he learned of it had been no less disastrous. *The man had died.* There was no longer any pensioner to claim his annuity; no creditor even to demand the price of his awful bargain; no witness to testify to its hideous terms—he had fled the jurisdiction of all earthly courts. Sir Richard was free. But the thought of that life forfeited to his own egotism was a millstone about his neck, bowing him forever to the ground.

However, Mortmain was not a person to permit what he regarded as mere sentimentality to get the better of him. Within a week he was again "among those present" at every gathering of note, and he had dropped hints of his intention to give a new and unique musical entertainment which was to surpass anything of the kind theretofore attempted. He had also resumed his attentions to Lady Bella Forsythe with a definite purpose—that of rendering himself financially impregnable.

He intentionally talked frankly of Lord Russell. The old man had been highly respected and, indeed, moderately prominent in philanthropic circles. Mortmain had made a point of going personally to see the bas-relief erected to his memory. He learned that the next of kin was a Devon man who never came up to town, and that the executors had taken possession almost immediately and disposed of the house to an American millionaire, who was even now remodeling the historic mansion, inserting Grecian columns and putting on a Château de Nevers roof. Of course he inspected this with friends, was properly disgusted, and seized the opportunity to gratify his curiously morbid hunger for the details of the murder. He learned that, though few of the facts were known to the public, opinion had crystallized into a settled acceptance that the murderer had made good his escape and that the identity of the murderer was known. In fact, the silence of Scotland Yard was rendered nugatory by the reward of £1000 offered by the County Council for the apprehension of Saunders Leach, the recently discharged secretary of the philanthropist. Nothing had been heard of him since Lord Russell's butler had admitted him to the house, an hour or two before the murder, upon his representation that he had come to look over some papers at the request of his erstwhile master. The butler, a most respectable person, had introduced him into the library, where Lord Russell was, and departed. He had recalled afterward—it had come out at the hearing at the Central Criminal Court—that he had heard the sound of voices raised at a high pitch, but, as his master was at times somewhat querulous, this had not particularly attracted his attention. An hour later, when he had brought the evening papers, he had discovered the aged man lying face downward upon his desk, and a window, bearing the bloody traces of the assassin, open to the night. And Leach had vanished—as if he had never lived.

But the thing most puzzling to Sir Richard, as to everybody else, was the failure of any apparent motive for so ghastly a deed. Leach, according to old Floyd the butler, had been a very decent sort of fellow, rather sickly Floyd took him to be, without any particular faults or virtues. It seemed to outrage reason to suppose that an anæmic little clerk could have murdered a helpless old man simply out of revenge for having lost his place. And then nothing had been stolen—that is, nobody but Sir Richard knew that anything had been stolen. Yet the public and the London County Council pronounced unhesitatingly as established fact that Saunders Leach was the assassin, and that he should be hunted down to the very ends of the world and, if need be, followed into the next. Only Scotland Yard remained silent after annexing the contents of the room, the windows, the carpet, and even portions of the faded paper from the very walls themselves. Then Parliament had gone into a convulsion over a proposed excise alteration and London had forgotten the murder of Lord Russell in its feverish interest in the expected legislative abortion. There had been an appeal to the country; a Premier had retired to Italy; some few thousands had been added to the credit column of the national ledger at the expense of a ministry, and once more the advent of royalty at St. James had dazzled the cockney eye and filled the cockney mouth to the stultification of the cockney brain. Lord Russell was forgotten—as completely as Saunders Leach—as totally as an isle sunk beneath the waters of oblivion.

The first time Sir Richard had essayed to write he had been deliciously horrified at the ease with which his pencil had followed the pressure of his new fingers. His recent clothes added an extra inch to his sleeves and his broad cuffs fully concealed the white seam that ran around his wrist. The hand itself served his purposes well enough, but unmistakably it was not his own. He never laid the two together—never let his eyes fall upon the vicarious fingers if he could avoid it, for inevitably a sickening sensation of repulsion followed. His own fingers were long and tapering, the nails fine with pronounced "crowns," the back of the hand slender and smooth; the new one was broad and hairy, the fingers shorter and square at the ends, the nails thick and dull with no "crowns," and the veins blue and prominent. There were too many pores!

He loathed the thing, tell himself as often as he would that it was nothing but a mechanical device to supplement Nature. He felt somehow as if he were married to an ugly, coarse, vulgar widow after having been divorced from a beautiful wife. Physically he felt as if he were wearing a glove that was too small for him, into which he had been forced to stuff his hand. This seemed to produce a tight, swollen sensation which was the only indication of his abnormal condition. He ate, drove, used his keys, articulated his fingers, and even wrote with the same muscular freedom as before. His chirography actually and undeniably exhibited the same general characteristics, only intensified and with less certainty of stroke and pen-pressure. The letters which had previously been merely somewhat original in structure as suited a man of fashion, now became humpbacked and deformed. It was as though the spiritual qualities of Sir Richard's penmanship had shrunk away, leaving only the grotesque residue of a dwarfed and evil nature.

But apart from the question of chirography one other manifestation constantly reminded Mortmain of his crime. This was an itching in the grafted hand whenever its possessor became angry or excited. Even hard physical exercise produced the same phenomenon. It seemed as if Nature, having provided for the circulation of a certain amount of blood, found on reaching this particular extremity that the supply exceeded the power of reception. If angered, he found himself indulging in almost ungovernable fits of passion, with his eyes suffused and his head buzzing. At times he experienced an almost irresistible impulse to throttle somebody. On the slightest provocation the fingers of his right hand would curve and clutch, and a fierce longing seize him to compass the extinction of life in some animate being—to feel the slackening of the muscles in some victim—an emotion elemental, barbarous, cruel, but keen, masterful and pervading. He had an exhilarating sensation of strength and vitality new to him. Moreover, his attitude toward his fellow-men had imperceptibly altered. Before his operation he had hated all evil-doers and been strongly loyal to government and law; now he sympathized with the lawbreakers. In defying society and deliberately violating its statutes, he had allied himself with its enemies.

This he realized and accepted. At any moment he might be called upon to face a criminal prosecution for the felony of mutilation; and there was still the peculiar and inexplicable silence of Flaggs in regard to the papers which he had taken away with him on the morning after the murder. No word had ever passed between them on the subject, and yet the notes were outstanding and in the hands of a more dangerous holder than even Lord Russell himself. By merely handing them to the executors, Flaggs could not only throw Sir Richard into bankruptcy, but could place him in the awkward position of having suppressed the notes at the time of Lord Russell's death. That, too, would lead to a still further and more delicate complication. He would naturally be asked how he had secured possession of the notes. It would be clear that they were in Lord Russell's hands at the time of the murder. Flaggs would explain that *he* had procured them from Sir Richard. So far as *he* was concerned, he had been safely "jugged" at the time of the murder. He could call a score of sergeants, matrons and bobbies to prove that, and establish it by the police records themselves. Where, then, people would want to know, had Sir Richard obtained them? It would be a hard question to answer in such a way that the answer would carry any sort of conviction with it.

No one, of course, would believe that he had found them, as in fact was the case. Any such explanation would excite instant suspicion. If he should say that he had paid them and had received the notes from Lord Russell's lawyers, inquiry would at once demonstrate that the lawyers had never had possession of the notes, or received any money from Sir Richard. If he said that he had taken the money to Lord Russell and received the notes *from him*, his own evidence would place him upon the scene of the murder at approximately the moment of it. Further, no draft in

The Dead-White Hand Twitching and Throbbing Until He Thought He Should Go Mad

payment of the notes would be found among Lord Russell's papers, and the suspicion would immediately arise that he had proffered a forged draft to secure possession of the notes, and then murdered the old man to get it back.

It was indeed a predicament of the worst sort. In Sir Richard the horrible unfairness of it bred a hatred for a society in which such things were possible. He looked at any moment to find himself made the defendant in a criminal prosecution, just or unjust—the unjust the more difficult of the two to escape. He needed money—money to fight with, money to live on, money to keep up his hollow pretense of respectability. And as his attitude toward society gradually changed, the dead-alive thing at his wrist with the white seam throbbed and itched until Mortmain longed fiercely to tear it off. At night he would dream—and this dream repeated itself over and over again—that he was fastened to some miserable convict, shackled by the wrist in such a way that somehow they two had grown together, and as he struggled in his sleep his fellow would turn into the grinning, jeering image of Flaggs—Flaggs fastened to him by a bond of burning, itching flesh—Flaggs joined to him like a Siamese twin, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood—until by some unnatural evolution *he* became Flaggs and could see his own wretched shape writhing at the other end of their mutual arm. Then shaking, chilled and covered with perspiration he would awake and look for Flaggs beside him, and hold his hand to the blue night-light only to find the seam about his wrist and the dead-white hand throbbing until he thought he should go mad.

By day he was haunted by the vision of Flaggs watching his house and following him along the streets. He could not get the fellow out of his mind. This terror of the drunken clerk became a positive obsession. As he walked the streets or drove in his brougham through the park he was constantly planning out what he should say when they should finally come together—when Flaggs should call for him, summon him as his own. Could he defy him? Could he palliate him? The hand twitched at the thought of it. He fancied that Flaggs followed him everywhere in various disguises, running swiftly behind, dodging into doorways and up side streets when he turned around. And this habit of turning around and glancing furtively up and down grew on Sir Richard, and with it grew the itching in his hand, until he suspected that people shook their heads and said that his illness had undermined his health more than they had supposed.

It was no bodily illness that thus affected Sir Richard, but spiritual degeneration. He went from dinner-party to dinner-party and from musicale to musicale, paying court to Lady Bella Forsythe as if no grotesque face were peering from behind the arras of his brain. Yet in reality he was preparing to meet Flaggs in the final struggle for supremacy. Flaggs, like death and the tax man, was coming—*when?* He could not tell, but inevitably. And he must be ready, armed *cap-à-pie* to meet him on every ground. He had at last resolved to marry Lady Bella. It was an essential in his campaign to defeat Flaggs. There must be plenty of money—money, that was what he needed, what he wanted. It was partly for Lady Bella that he had planned his musical entertainment, for, in addition to its practical desirability, if he purposed to retain his position in the social world, it would afford an excellent opportunity for presenting himself to her as a person worthy of her own high station and acquaintance. His own music——! Alas, the brain was willing, but the fingers were powerless. Where before he had produced the most delicate of harmonies there now resulted nothing but harsh discords. The hand would not stretch an octave!

The Milbank Street house blazed into the early evening with a thousand lights. All day long wagons of roses and asters had stood before the doors, and aproned men had staggered into the hall with pots of flowers and stands of palms. Confectioners' wagons, loads of camp chairs, and now a large awning were the indubitable evidences of what was afoot. Night came on. The white cloth on the carpet across the sidewalk was trampled to a dirty gray. The orchestra began to arrive, and, shedding their coats in the servants' entrance, toiled up the back stairs and tentatively made their way through the flower-banked halls to the conservatory. Sir Richard sitting in his den and awaiting the arrival of his first guests could hear the musicians tuning their bases and testing the wood winds. But there was no music in Sir Richard's soul. All day long he had been haunted by the ghost of Flaggs scuttling behind him, and his hand had seemed swollen and discolored. Well, if he could but get through the night, could succeed in his suit with Lady Bella, he would go away and rest. Perhaps he would leave London forever—Lady Bella was very fond of Rome. The sounds of the instruments grew more confused and louder, the violins mingling with the others. Occasionally the trombones would boom out and the kettles rumble ominously. Outside splashes of rain began to fall against the windows, and the wind, catching in the hollow column of the awning, swept into the halls and through the open door into the den. Mortmain looked at his watch and found it was ten o'clock. People would be arriving soon. His hand twitched and he lighted a cigarette. There was a great deal of traffic in the front hall—too much. He closed the door and poured out a thimbleful of brandy. Well, a day or two and he would be rid of Flaggs forever! Then he heard a low knock. He tried to cheat himself into the belief that it was Joyce.

"Come in," he cried, but his voice was husky.

Flaggs stood before him.

"I Think Not, Mr. Flaggs!"

"I have been expecting you," said Mortmain. It did not seem strange that he should make this declaration.

"Yes?" queried Flaggs.

"What do you want?" demanded the baronet.

"Ten thousand pounds," answered the clerk. "To-morrow."

Mortmain broke into a harsh laugh.

"Ha! my good fellow! What do you think I am—a Cræsus? Come, come, I'll give you fifty—and I get the notes, eh?"

"Ten thousand pounds," repeated Flaggs stubbornly, "by to-morrow noon, or I hand you over to the police."

The blood jumped into Sir Richard's face and his dexter hand throbbed and tingled.

"You miserable rascal!" he cried. "You wretched blackmailer! How dare you come into my house? Do you know that I could *kill* you? And no one would ever be the wiser! Take a few pounds and be off with you or I'll summon the police myself."

"Not so fast, not so fast, Sir Richard," muttered Flaggs with a white face. "I don't think you'll call the police."

The look on the scowling face before him told Sir Richard that the fellow meant to do his business. A haunting fear seized hold upon him like that which he had experienced in the depot wagon—a feeling that behind this grotesque, dwarfed figure of a man lurked the hand of Fate.

"That's right. Be reasonable," said Flaggs soothingly. "Some folks would think ten thousand pounds was cheap to escape the gallows," he added in lower tones.

"Gallows!" cried Sir Richard, his anger rising. He knew the fellow's game now. He was being lied to. Flaggs was trying to frighten, to bully him. "The gallows, my friend, ceased to be the punishment for felony in 1826—even for blackmail!"

"But not for murder," retorted Flaggs with a ghastly smile. "Not for murder!"

"Enough of this!" exclaimed Sir Richard, but his knees were trembling. "Here are a hundred pounds. Go!" He put his hand to his breast-pocket.

Flaggs laughed.

"Look at this," he cried, pulling from the lining of his hat a printed page which he unfolded and handed to the baronet.

Mortmain took it in dread and held it to the light.

"*Murder in the first degree defined.*

"*The taking of the life of a human being by another with malice prepense or in the commission of a felony.*"

The last six words were underlined in red ink.

"Well?" he asked, but the word stuck in his throat.

"Well?" returned the other. "It's plain enough, isn't it? What more do you want?"

"It is not plain, you blackguard."

"Maiming is a felony. You know that. Flynt told you so. The fellow that sold you that hand of yours died of it, didn't he?"

Mortmain uttered an exclamation of horror. He looked down at the fearful thing and it seemed to him to be the color of death. "They can never prove it!" he cried faintly. "They can't prove it! They cannot!"

"I saw it done," remarked Flaggs. "I saw him buried in the garden. He is there yet—minus his hand."

"You villain!" gasped Mortmain. The room reeled, and Flaggs danced before him, gibbering with glee. The light darkened and brightened again and seemed to swing in circles.

"Pull yourself together, Sir Richard!" remarked Flaggs mockingly. "Pull yourself together! Isn't it worth ten thousand pounds or one hundred thousand pounds? But I'm reasonable. Only ten thousand pounds! Come, come! Let me have it!"

"*No!*" shouted Mortmain. "Not if I die for it."

"You *will* die for it," said Flaggs.

The sound of the fiddles came through the closed door of the study. The cries of the lackeys and the roll of carriages arriving and departing came from the front.

"You will die for it, as there is a God in Heaven, if I choose!"

Mortmain stood silent. He had a presentiment of what Flaggs was going to say.

"A word from me," continued the clerk, "and you hang for the murder of Lord Russell. Every one knows you hated him. Flynt, Joyce and I heard you say you would kill him. You owed him seventy-five thousand pounds and it was two days overdue. He would have ruined you next day. The officer saw you on the spot within five minutes of the murder, and so did I. There was nothing taken but the notes—nothing. They were found in your possession the next morning. How did they get there? The case is complete. The notes convict you. I've got them. They are yours for ten thousand pounds—only ten thousand pounds."

"You villain," shouted Mortmain, springing toward him.

The door from the hall opened and Joyce entered letting in the warm breath of roses and the loud strains of a waltz.

"Lady Bella has arrived, Sir Richard," he announced.

"Tell her I am coming," said Mortmain, starting for the door.

"Wait!" shrieked Flaggs, his face horribly distorted. "Wait!" Joyce had retired.

Mortmain paused with clenched fists.

"Isn't it worth ten thousand pounds to save a guilty man—a man who can't escape?"

"Why, you fool!" cried Mortmain, suddenly regaining his self-control. "Such evidence is valueless. My word is worth *yours* ten times over. I say that you did not find the notes in my house. I say that *you* are the murderer. And I believe you are!"

"Not so fast! Not so fast!" leered Flaggs. "You know I was 'in quod' at the time. Don't forget that! And

(Continued on Page 19)

THREE OF "THE FINEST"

By ANDREW I. ALBERT

A Station-House Feud

Kitty O'Brien

ROUNDSMAN Anthony Mountri was the "Black Hand" expert of the Police Department. The reports which he submitted on his investigations into the character, origin and scope of this blackmailing society were voluminous and interesting, as well as highly creditable to his imagination.

Now, when Gilhooley became chief of police he happened to stumble on Mountri's literary efforts, and read some of them with huge enjoyment. Gilhooley had been on the Force over thirty years, and had risen from the bottom of the ladder to the top, so that he knew a thing or two about the business. He sent for McIvor, who had charge of the Detective Bureau.

"Say, Tom," he asked with a broad grin, "what's all them Old Sleuth stories here, published in 'typewritin' by The Anthony Mountri Publishing Company?"

He read one or two passages, by way of illustration, in which the Mafia was described as "the largest, best-organized secret society in the world, covering all Europe and America."

"Them is the reports on the Black Hand," answered McIvor with becoming gravity.

"Reports on your grandmother!" snorted the chief. "Is that all Tony does to earn fifteen hundred a year?"

"That's all."

"H'm! He ought to work for a Sunday paper. They pay high for fairy tales. Send him to the —— precinct. If he kin kid Jim Phelan along like that, he's a peach."

"He knows a good deal about them Italian gangs, Chief," remonstrated the inspector.

"He does, eh? Well, there are lots of them in Jim Phelan's precinct. Knows a lot about 'em, don't he? And only made five arrests in a year! I think he's in with those Dagoes himself. Anyway, he's had that snap long enough." The chief wheeled around in his chair, and began sorting papers once more.

It really was nothing more than a coincidence, but Mountri felt certain, when he heard of the transfer, that it was made in order to give his enemy an opportunity to repay a grudge of long standing. For Sergeant James F. H. Phelan, acting captain of the —— precinct, did not view his new subordinate with great favor. Years ago, when Phelan was a wardman, Mountri had carried tales to headquarters, and it was principally as the effect of his testimony in the trial on charges which resulted that Phelan had been dismissed from the Force. Not that Mountri's testimony was entirely false, but that where the truth was insufficient he did not hesitate to give free play to his fancy. That Phelan deserved punishment there can be no doubt. The judge who reinstated him, after a hearing on *certiorari* proceedings, was not conferring a benefit on the municipality. Still, it was equally certain that the roundsman had not been animated by any very creditable motives in turning informer, but was simply currying favor with a new police administration, and, to obtain it, did not scruple to sacrifice a brother officer. He lied a great deal on the witness-stand, and he guessed at a great deal more. To be sure, many of his guesses were not far from the truth, but that, of course, could not palliate the offense in Phelan's eyes. That, however, all happened a long time ago, and the acting captain was not of a revengeful disposition.

"You played me a dirty trick, Tony," he told the former sleuth, "and I won't pretend I've forgotten it, for I haven't. But you're going to get a square deal here; there'll be no paying off old scores. So if you've worried any on that account, you can quit right now. I didn't get you transferred here to get revenge, although you may think I did."

His surmise was correct. Tony came from a section of the globe where the vendetta is part of the code of honor, and his faith in human forgiveness was not very great.

"Square deal I'll get—not," he thought, and met Phelan's advances with grim incredulity.

. . . . . .

When Roundsman Anthony Mountri returned to the station-house after doing the late tour he was pretty thoroughly exhausted. To patrol the crowded streets of that section of the city, on a warm, muggy night, with uniform-coat closely buttoned according to the Rules and Regulations, is not the pleasantest task one can imagine, even under a three-platoon system. Years of service as a Black Hand investigator had softened his muscles and unfitted him for regular patrol duty. That is one of the disadvantages of a pleasant detail.

The dawn of the new day brought with it a blessed little miniature hurricane, which blew away the low-lying, sticky fog and cleared the humid atmosphere. The weary officer reported to the desk sergeant, and then climbed heavily up the stairs, unbuttoning his blouse as he went. There was a cool, snow-white cover on the broad, iron cot—it afforded him unutterable delight. Quickly he stripped and jumped into bed, and as he did so several small, hard, black objects fell to the floor.

Well, it was an unpleasant trick, and there was really very little that was humorous about it. On the other hand, it was, at most, only a rough practical joke. But Mountri was a Sicilian, and such things sunk deeply into his heart and turned to gall there. He sat quietly on a chair with the quilt wrapped around him while the matron removed the coal from the mattress, and changed the covers which had been thoroughly saturated with water. There were several men in the room, and one of them laughed out loud. Tony couldn't tell which one it was, but he thought how pleasant it would be to draw his revolver and kill them all as they sat there. Not against them, however, was his deepest resentment directed.

"Phelan's work," he thought; and, even though it occurred to him that some one else might have been the actual perpetrator of the joke, he concluded it must be at his enemy's instigation. He brooded over the matter for many hours as he lay in bed, and rose several times during the night, for the fire in his heart would not let him sleep. Once he walked toward the door, intending to find Phelan; then he remembered his dress and went back to bed. He could not sleep all night.

Phelan heard of what had occurred, and was very much troubled.

"Who did it?" he asked.

Now there is no sergeant more beloved of his men than Jim Phelan. So Horigan confessed. To be sure, Tim did not expect a very severe reprimand; he had been in the "Green Light" precinct when the wardman was dismissed through Mountri's efforts.

"Guess I've got to plead guilty, Captain," he said, grinning amiably.

"That's a fool trick, Tim," reproved Phelan tartly. "What's more, I can't see anything funny in it. I mean this. I want to act right by that fellow; nothing that happened in the past counts. If you want to please me, leave him alone. He gets a square deal in this precinct while I'm running it."

Horigan expressed repentance. Like Mountri, however, he was by no means convinced of the captain's sincerity.

"Look out for the Dago," he advised. "You ought-a heard him last night—so mad he couldn't sleep all night—runnin' round the room, wavin' his hands, talkin' to himself. Thinks you did it—I hear him say so."

"You did?" queried Phelan tartly. "Well, then, why don't you tell him you did it? Not afraid, are you? And after this, just mind your own business and don't butt into my affairs. I ought to give you a complaint for this." Whereat the patrolman withdrew, abashed and highly incensed.

"Afraid, am I!" he muttered. "Throwin' me down for a carey! I'll show him who's afraid!" He sought out Mountri at the very first opportunity and told him all about it.

"Now give me a paper if you like," he said, sticking out his jaw aggressively.

"Who told you to do it?" was the eager question.

"No one!"

"You lie!"

The Irishman took the insult coolly. "An' even if anny wan did, d'ye think I'm a squealer, too?" And with this parting shot he turned on his heel and walked away, while Mountri stood staring after him for quite some time.

The next day Tony caught Horigan off post—of course. The week following came two more complaints, and on the succeeding Sunday the roundsman found Tim in a saloon, in full uniform—quite a serious matter, for it was not only a violation of police rules, but of the Excise Law as well. "The Society for the Cultivation of Virtue in Others" heard of the affair (probably through Mountri's disinterested efforts), and so, on their representation, the Deputy Commissioner was unusually severe. In the Society's eyes, a violation of the precious Excise Law was worse than murder in the first degree. Horigan was fined ten days' pay, and received a severe reprimand besides.

"An' he ain't done poundin' me yet," he told Kelly, his side-partner.

"Why don't you speak to the captain about it?"

"Why? Because I ain't knucklin' to nobody. Because he knows what's goin' on, an' if he wanted to help me he'd do it without my askin' him."

Which was perfectly true. Phelan did know what was going on, but, for reasons which it would occupy too much space to explain, he would not and, in fact, could not interfere.

After the last heavy fine, however, Mountri rested, apparently satisfied with the injury he had inflicted. But the mischief was already done: the ten days' fine barred Horigan from the examination for roundsmen which was shortly to take place. Now, promotion examinations are few and infrequent, occurring at intervals of from three to five years. Tim had prepared for the next one faithfully, and it is therefore not strange that he became gloomy and despondent.

Efforts to have the fine remitted in the usual way were fruitless.

"It's the Society," explained the boss of the ward after several visits to Mulberry Street; "they're looking for a chance like this to get into the papers, Tim; they'd holler murder-watch if your fine was struck off the records. Wait until everybody's forgotten about it, and I'll try again."

Tim explained profanely that if he waited he would be too late for the next examination. Then he went out, drank, and so temporarily forgot his troubles. This was an unusual proceeding for Tim, who was a sober, hard-working fellow—never intoxicated except on Christmas, the Fourth of July, and other important holidays, when he considered it a matter of patriotic duty. It was the grown-up child's way of being "bad" after punishment, in order to be revenged.

Thereafter, Horigan's periods of sobriety were few and far between. Scharton and Dietrich, the other two roundsmen of the precinct, found him twice in a condition which

A Bareheaded Man Broke Through and Ran Away at the Top of His Speed

made patrolling as easy as flying, and warned him. Result: Horigan transferred his profitable patronage to another saloon on his post, where he drank more than ever, to prove that he was an independent American citizen.

"He used to have lucid intervals," Kelly reported mournfully to the captain, "but he's always stewed now. If something ain't done soon, it's good-by Tim."

Then the devoted Kelly went upstairs and loyally put ice on his side-partner's head and called him bad names, which revived Horigan to such an extent that he abused Mountri most foully before all the men of that platoon, and would, in fact, have assaulted him had not Kelly thrown Horigan on the bed and sat on him until he fell asleep.

Mountri searched every saloon and cigar-store on Tim's post next day, but could not find his man until Von Hauser told him. Von Hauser had found the friendship of an able-bodied policeman, who has made up his mind to avoid sobriety, rather expensive.

"I stoot for all der peers he could trink," explained the aggrieved German, "put ven he vill have sherry und egg und sherry und egg und noting else—dot costs too much."

So the next time Mountri came in Von Hauser nodded his head toward the next room—which was quite sufficient. And right here it may be stated that, after this breach of professional ethics, Von Hauser did not open his doors, front or rear or side, on a Sunday, or after twelve o'clock, for many a long month.

Horigan was sitting alone in the small dark room, brooding deeply over his troubles. He was just at that stage of intoxication when a robust man becomes quarrelsome. An uneasy feeling of being gazed at caused him to look around.

"Drunk again," said Mountri, smiling amiably.

"I've Squared You, Tony; He's Down"

At the words and sneer, prudence, fear, the training of years were swept away before an ungovernable torrent of rage. Outside the door the saloon-keeper stood quaking with fright at the sound of falling chairs and tables and the stamp of heavy feet. Then the noise ceased suddenly, and he stepped aside, just in time, as the roundsman came flying through the door, bareheaded, face bleeding, uniform coat torn open, and several gold buttons missing. The patrolman followed more slowly. He was in scarcely better condition, but he paused a moment to put on his helmet and arrange his clothing before he went. Von Hauser breathed a sigh of relief as the outer door closed behind his unwelcome guest.

"Good-py dot feller's chob," he remarked. Then he looked ruefully at a sadly-depleted stock of eggs. "Id cost too much; I couldn't afford id," he protested, and the bartender nodded sympathetically.

"Tim Horigan," said Katharine O'Brien, "you've been drinking again."

Tim denied the accusation loftily.

"You have, too. No, don't touch me; don't *touch* me! Your breath smells from liquor. I won't keep company with a drunkard."

"Do I undershtand," asked Mr. Horigan with great dignity, "that you deshire to break engazhment?"

"You understand me correctly, Mr. Horigan." Whereupon Mr. Horigan said "Good-by, forever!" in a very dramatic tone, and walked out of the room, while his sweetheart sat down and wept.

That was two weeks ago. The repentant suitor came back twice to beg forgiveness, but each time the telltale fumes hardened Kitty's heart. So she sent him away indignantly, and then fled for consolation to her mother.

A week after the last visit came the news that Patrolman Horigan had assaulted his superior officer, and was to be dismissed from the Force, and about an hour after this intelligence had been communicated to her impulsive little Kitty stood before Acting Captain James F. H. Phelan in his private office.

"And has that old Mick got a girl like you?" asked the captain, looking with admiration at the black-eyed, rosy-cheeked girl, with her tall, trim figure, and air of unaffected grace. "Well, some people are born lucky!"

She dimpled in pretty confusion and delight at the evident sincerity of the compliment.

"You're an awfully nice man," she said frankly, and Phelan patted himself in delight and mock approval.

Then the tears came to her eyes again. "And do you really think Tim will lose his position, Captain?"

"That should not make much difference to him while he's got you," answered Phelan gallantly. "But I'm afraid it's going to be hard to do anything; that's a pretty discouraging note I got from the chief." He held the piece of paper so that it was necessary for her to stand quite close to him in order to read it.

"Oh, I didn't know—have you tried already? Oh, aren't you good!" She read the short, curt, typewritten epistle which had come from Mulberry Street. "Oh, then, they will dismiss him!" she cried despairingly.

"Not until I've had another try," averred Phelan, touched by her emotion. "I'll go and see Corry to-day, and maybe he can persuade the Deputy Commish to be easy."

The girl's face beamed again. "And Mr. Corry will tell them not to dismiss him, won't he? Oh, you are a perfect dear!" She moved closer to him. "I don't think Tim would mind," she said, the blood rushing to her face, "and you are a good old man!"

Then she bent down and deliberately kissed him.

Phelan sprang to his feet, laughing. "Right in the eye!" he cried. "After that, just let them try to break him." He shook his fist threateningly. "But I'm not an old man, girl; you must take that back."

Kitty apologized sweetly. At the door she turned with some embarrassment.

"If you—that is—please, don't tell Tim I was here, Captain."

"Why?"

"Because—because we had a quarrel; he was a little—not quite sober." She made the admission with reluctance and then, tossing her head coquettishly, added: "Besides, I don't want him to think I care."

Phelan grinned in open delight. "All right, then; mum's the word. Sh!"

"Good-by, Captain."

"Good-by, Katharine."

A gleam of perfect teeth, a smile that seemed to light up the room, and Kitty was gone, leaving Phelan to look after her with the last smile still reflected on his face.

"Ain't he the lucky Mick?" he said aloud.

Phelan sent for Horigan. That gentleman answered the summons somewhat tardily.

"Tim, your girl was here—Kitty O'Brien, I mean."

"No!" The patrolman sat suddenly erect, while his heavy eyes lit up with joy.

"Yes," contradicted Phelan. "But if you tell her I told you, Tim, I'll knock your brains out with this. See it?" He held out a heavy night-stick.

"I won't say a word, Cap. What'd she say?"

"Never you mind what she said; it's a shame that a girl like that should waste herself on a beast like you."

Horigan's face expressed complete assent to this sentiment. "That's a fact, Cap'n; she's a whole lot too good for me." Then he added with deep gloom: "But she ain't throwin' herself away on me; she give me back the ring a week ago—an' I don't blame her."

"Neither do I! Tim, this is the first time you've been even half-sober in three weeks, isn't it?"

Silence.

"Tim," continued the captain in his most amiable voice, "you aren't a man; you're a pig."

Tim nodded meekly.

"You've got a yellow streak in you. Instead of facing your troubles like a man, you run away and get drunk. I used to think you had some sand in you, Tim." He paused a moment to let his words sink deeply, and then resumed: "You pretend to love and respect this girl, don't you?"

"Yes," was the fervent reply.

"And yet you go around to see her as drunk as any ordinary, common, dirty barroom loafer. Do you expect a good, clean girl like that to care for a man whose breath would knock a cow over, and who can't walk straight? Why, I should think she'd be so disgusted she couldn't look at you."

Horigan rose to his feet, his face wrinkled with shame, anger and remorse. "That's enough from you, Jim Phelan!" he said hoarsely. "You kin call me down as much as you like 'bout police business, but you ain't got no right to speak to me like that 'bout my private affairs—captain or no captain!"

"Tim," said Phelan totally unmoved, "you're a fool, or you'd know I wasn't speaking to you as your captain, but as your friend. Sit down; I want to show you what a beast you are, so that you'll wonder how a good, pure girl like Kitty O'Brien can trust her life and happiness to a man that's shown himself capable of falling as low as you have."

It took some time to reduce Horigan to what the captain thought was a proper state of humility, but after he had succeeded, and the contrite bluecoat was figuratively groveling in the dust, his superior thought fit to let in a ray of hope.

"I'm going down to see Corry; he may be able to fix this up for you and get you off with a fine—and that's more than you deserve—striking a roundsman. Oh, I know he was pounding you, and to pay him back you played right into his hands, I suppose. Well, it's all over now. You go up to-night and make up with that little girl of yours—and be careful you don't let her know I told you she was here. That's all, now; get out." Which Tim did, but not until after he had shaken Phelan's hand, and said: "Thank you, sir," and choked a little, and been ashamed of his emotion, as any full-grown man should be.

It was the night preceding primary day and, having just finished the tour of reserve, Horigan went around to see Kitty and to propose a walk. Peace had been made after he had sworn solemnly never to touch liquor again. The charges for assaulting Mountri were to be tried the next day, and Tim told Kitty, with some pride, that there was a position already waiting for him if the worst happened.

It was an ideal lovers' night; the September sky was soft and cool and of the deepest blue; the stars seemed smaller, but brighter and more numerous than usual. In some portions of the heavens they were very small and very numerous, and Kitty, looking dreamily upward, thought they looked like a shower of gold-dust that had been thrown into the air and floated upward to the blue. Now and then, when they came to a portion of the avenue where the tall tenement-houses did not obstruct the view, they caught a glimpse of the full moon, moving like a huge lamp through the sky, lighting up for human eyes the picture painted by the Master's hand.

"It's never the same picture," said Kitty; "sometimes it's deep blue, and blue, and nothing but blue, and the next night it's much lighter in color, and there are white clouds, and maybe less stars, or maybe they'll look larger, and the moon is different, and oh, it's different in every way—but just as beautiful."

And Tim answered nothing, but drank deeply of the cup of joy which it is given man but once in a lifetime to taste.

They walked and walked for many hours, forgetful of time, of the cares and troubles which the new day must bring, living only in the present, content each with the other.

It was quite late when they turned their faces homeward. The streets lay white and still beneath the white rays of the moon, and the double row of lamp-posts stretched away in two long, symmetrical lines until they vanished in the distance.

The crowds of political henchmen, weary from the day's work on behalf of their political bosses, had long since retired. At a certain street-corner a huge silk banner was stretched across the street. O'Reilly's name was blazoned thereon in letters of gold. Only a dozen feet behind it floated a second banner—and that was the cause of the trouble. For it represented the political ambitions of another enterprising son of Erin, who had thrown down the gauntlet to the ruling sachem of Tammany Hall. O'Reilly resented bitterly this attempt to deprive him of the control of the ward, and expatiated at length upon the ingratitude of his antagonist, to whom, in times past, he had not been ungenerous in the award of political sugar-plums.

A crowd had gathered beneath the second banner, and as Tim and Kitty drew near they saw that a man was climbing one of the posts by which it was supported.

"Is he going to tear it down, Tim?" asked Kitty—and just then a uniformed officer ran by them, crossed the street, and dove impetuously into the crowd.

"See that roundsman?" asked Horigan. "The one that just passed?"

Kitty nodded.

"Well, that's Mountri. He's up agin' it, too; that's the Limpy Jack gang, all Dagoes; they'll knife him as soon as look at him." But Mountri apparently had no fear of being knifed; nor did the gang show any hostility toward him, at first. In fact, they seemed to know him, and to be on friendly terms with him. They talked and gesticulated a good deal, but the roundsman waved them aside and shouted a command to the fellow who was climbing the post. The latter, after a moment's hesitation, descended. A tall man, in a high silk hat, pushed his way through the crowd, and said something to the officer in a loud voice.

"Looks like Osborne, the man who's runnin' agin' O'Reilly. He's tellin' Mountri to arrest that feller—the one that tried to cut down his banner," explained Tim.

Suddenly the silk hat disappeared, the crowd surged forward, and a moment later a bareheaded man broke through and ran away at the top of his speed, followed by a chorus of hoots and howls and derisive shouts.

Horigan laughed aloud. "Let's go over and see the fun, Kit," he proposed. They crossed over to the other side and stood in a doorway several feet from the crowd.

"They're coming toward us," Kitty cried suddenly, and shrank against him in fear. The roundsman was being pushed toward the sidewalk; by his side walked a heavily-built, swarthy fellow, with a long, red scar on his face.

"He's got the nippers on Limpy," said Horigan, growing more thoughtful. "There'll be trouble now, for sure." Then he added suddenly, "And I hope they knock his head off."

"No, you don't," said Kitty sharply, but her companion only glowered in sullen disagreement.

At the saloon door on the corner Mountri stood at bay, his prisoner still fastened to him. The two spectators were only a few feet distant, and could see and hear almost all that transpired. A dark, slim young fellow, wearing glasses, who seemed to be the leader, was talking in earnest tones to the roundsman, who only shook his head stubbornly.

"Can't do it, Filipo," he said; "Limpy's under arrest, and he's going to the station-house; I ain't going to run a chance of losing my job for anybody." Then, as the crowd pressed closely around him, pulling at his prisoner, he lifted his night-stick and drove them back.

"Will they hurt him, Tim?" asked Kitty anxiously.

"Don't know and don't care," answered Horigan shortly. "But I don't think they will; he's callin' them by their first names like they were his brothers—some of his Black Hand friends, maybe."

And, indeed, the gang showed a reluctance to resort to force or violence, which was not at all in keeping with their reputation. They gathered around the officer and his prisoner once more, but the latter suddenly cried out in pain, and spoke rapidly in Italian to his would-be rescuers, who thereupon retired a few feet and began consulting earnestly.

"Guess he twisted the nippers on Limpy and Limpy told them to go away," explained Horigan.

Seeing the street unobstructed before him, Mountri started off again, his prisoner by his side. He had gone only a few steps, however, when they overtook him once more. Hither and thither they hustled the officer, pleading and threatening, but he remained obdurate.

"You can't have this man unless you leave half his hand behind," he shouted, and Kitty, hearing him, exclaimed in admiration: "Isn't he brave!"

"He's only doing what any cop would do," answered Horigan, who would not admit any good qualities in his enemy.

The gang was fast beginning to lose its temper, but when Mountri struck a particularly troublesome fellow over the arm with his club, the whole mob retired in apparent uncertainty.

Tap! tap! tap! went the roundsman's stick on the flagstones, ringing out an appeal for assistance which would be heard by patrolmen on their posts for many blocks around. The signal roused his antagonists to sudden activity.

"We got to have that man!" shouted the spectacled leader, and he led a second rush on the plucky officer. Knives and black-jacks appeared as if by magic; it was evident that the gang was growing desperate.

The girl had grown pale and frightened, and was watching the struggle with painful intensity.

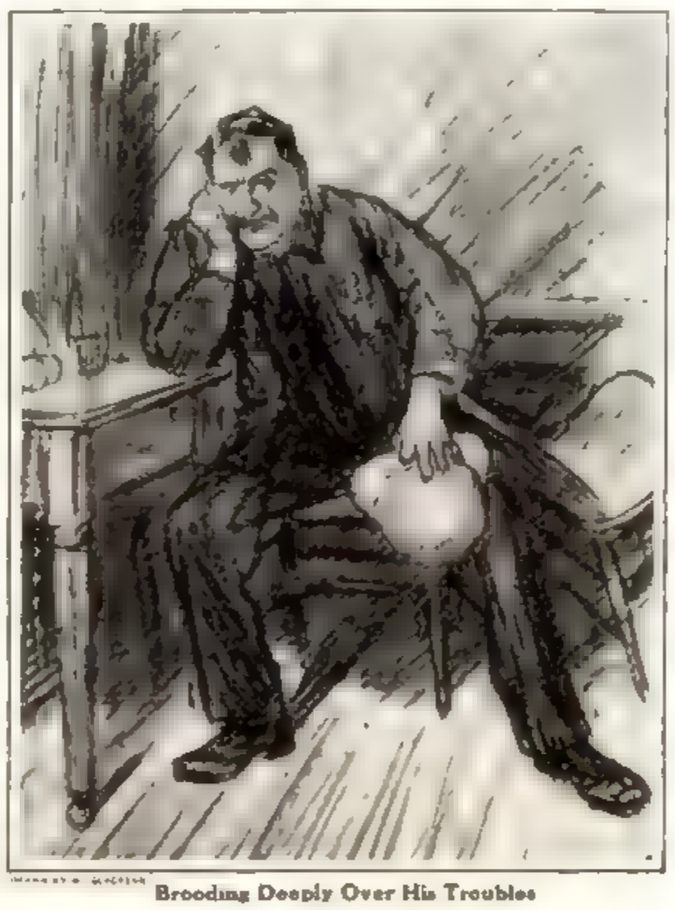
"Tim, you must help him!" she said suddenly. But Horigan only shook his head.

"Not him," he replied; "he wouldn't lift a finger to save me from being murdered."

A quick-witted spectator raised the cry of "Chigamaroo, chigamaroo, the cops!" and in a moment Mountri was alone with his prisoner. Only for a moment, however, for the ruse was quickly discovered, and his assailants gathered once more.

Tap! tap! tap! went the night-stick again, ringing out its loud appeal. Horigan shifted on his feet uneasily, fighting against the police instinct which would send him to answer the well-known signal.

The gang hustled the roundsman and his prisoner away from the door, and some one struck him from behind, causing the blood to flow from a cut under the eye. Mountri turned around, but the coward who had done it was gone. Wild with rage, the policeman sprang forward suddenly, unheeding the anguished cries of his prisoner, whose wrist was lacerated by the sudden pull. The vigorous



Brooding Deeply Over His Troubles

blows of the night-stick drove the crowd into the street once more, after which Mountri returned to the shelter afforded by the door of the saloon.

"If you don't go and help him, Tim Horigan, I'll never speak to you again so long as I live!" The blood had returned to the girl's face, her eyes sparkled with anger, and her little fists were clenched. Tim shifted on his feet uneasily, but made no reply.

The gang was preparing for a new attack, when a slim, well-built young fellow sprang to the curbstone before them.

"That's Weintraub, the county detective," said Horigan, breathing sharply. Weintraub had a pistol in his hand, and he fired twice before the infuriated men reached him. The foremost man dropped, and another limped away, howling with pain, but his companions sprang forward, threw the detective to the ground and began deliberately kicking him as he lay unconscious at their feet.

Mountri started forward bravely to aid the fallen man, but before he could reach him Horigan was among the crowd, his short pocket-billy dealing deadly stabs to right and left.

"A fly-cop, a fly-cop!" At the cry, the mob surged backward, giving Horigan time, with Kitty's assistance, to drag Weintraub to Mountri's side.

Tap! tap! tap!—and again, and still once more, the night-stick's clarion appeal rang out. Help should have arrived long before this.

"Go 'way now, Kitty," pleaded Horigan; "this is men's work. How kin I fight when you're around?"

But Kitty only shook her head and directed her attention to reviving the wounded man.

"If I only had a little cold water," she said longingly.

"Better go away, miss," began Mountri in a respectful tone, but just then Horigan shouted, "Look out!" and sprang forward. Mountri was not an inch behind him. The next moment they were fighting for their lives. The spectacled leader struck at Mountri with a black-jack, and when the blow landed the roundsman's right arm dropped limply to his side. Horigan stabbed the assailant in the face with his short club, and he fell to the ground. In desperation the policeman finally drew his revolver, and at the sight of it the gang retired, carrying their unconscious leader with them.

"Hurt, Tony?" asked Horigan.

"Right arm broken," was the terse response.

"Pass me your night-stick then, if you can't use it." A moment later the heavy club was in his hand. "Where's your gun?"

"Ain't got it. One of 'em picked it out of my pocket."

"Glad I got mine." Tim examined the chambers of the pistol carefully, and Kitty, kneeling behind him over the wounded man, cried out hysterically: "Shoot them, Tim; shoot them!"

A pistol-shot rang out, and Mountri dropped with a groan, dragging his prisoner with him. Horigan's revolver answered twice, and he cried out exultantly: "I've squared you, Tony; he's down."

"Get together, get together!" shouted one of the gang, and, as the cry was repeated, the girl sprang up and stood in front of the police officers. Horigan grasped her gently by the arm and forced her behind him.

"No time for foolin' now, sweetheart," he said; "they'd just as lief hit a woman as a man."

One of the gang came forward and shouted something in Italian. Then he repeated in English: "Will ye give-a dat man up?"

Horigan looked down inquiringly at Mountri, who was sitting with his back propped against the wall.

"What do you say?" he asked. "He's your prisoner."

"Tell them to guess again!" answered Mountri with a sob. The tears were streaming down his face, and he was crying with rage at his helplessness.

"Good boy!" shouted Horigan, and transmitted the message to the waiting crowd, with additions of his own.

"Don't talk to them that way, Timmy," implored the girl. She was weeping now, and her hands were around his neck. He extricated himself gently, and turned around to console her.

"There, there, be a brave little girl. The patrol wagon'll be here pretty soon now."

She cried out a warning to him, and he turned quickly. A heavy brickbat struck him on the knee-cap and drove the blood from his face, so that he had to lean against her, while his revolver dropped to the ground and exploded harmlessly.

"Poor little Kitty!" he murmured, and then lost consciousness. Gently she lowered him to the ground, and sprang before him, her eyes blazing with anger. There were several hundred bystanders, yet not one of them dared come to her assistance.

One of the gang put his hand on the girl's shoulder, and she beat at him madly, whereupon another threw her backward across the prostrate forms behind. Mountri shouted something in Italian at that, and tried to rise, but the same man kicked him and threw him backward, so that his wounded arm bent under him, and he fainted from the pain. But his prisoner was still firmly fastened to his left wrist; never for a moment had the plucky Italian thought of letting go.

Limpy was in a pitiable condition, for the band of the nipper had worn into the flesh to the very bone. He groaned and cried out when the men who were trying to release him started up, jerking his arm suddenly, as some one cried out a loud warning.

The tardy patrol-wagon had come swiftly and silently down the avenue, with only the clatter of the horses' iron hoofs to betray its approach. A dozen brawny policemen tumbled out almost before it came to a standstill, with Phelan at their head. Kitty grasped and clung desperately to the thug who had thrown her down, and when he broke away Phelan, who was not far behind, overtook him before the fugitive had covered ten yards of ground.

"Pretty good for an old man!" he remarked to Kitty as he led his prisoner back, and the girl smiled wanly at him through her tears.

The sidewalk in front of the saloon looked like a miniature battlefield. Six of the gang had been captured, besides three who were so injured that they were unable to make even an attempt to escape. The man Weintraub had shot was dead; the county detective himself breathed his last on the way to the hospital. Horigan recovered consciousness in a very short time, and Mountri also opened his eyes before the ambulance arrived.

"Tony," said Tim, who went with him to the hospital, "I'm dead sorry about that trick I played on you; I didn't mean nuthin' by it."

(Concluded on Page 21)

THE FIGHTING CHANCE

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

AUTHOR OF IOLE, ETC.

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IV

BREAKFAST at Shotover, except for the luxurious sluggards to whom trays were sent, was served in the English fashion—any other method or compromise being impossible. Ferrall, reasonable in most things, detested customs exotic, and usually had an Englishman or two about the house to tell them so, being unable to jeer in any language except his own. Which is partly why Alderdene and Voucher were there. And this British sideboard breakfast was a concession wrung from him through force of sheer necessity, although the custom had already become practically universal in American country houses where guests were entertained.

But at the British breakfast he drew the line. No army of servants always in evidence would he tolerate either; no highly ornamented human bric-à-brac decorating halls and corners; no exotic pheasants hustled into covert and out again; no fusillade at the wretched, frightened, bewildered aliens dumped by the thousand into unfamiliar cover and driven toward the guns by improvised beaters.

"We walk up our game, or we follow a brace of good dogs in this white man's country," he said with unnecessary emphasis whenever his bad taste and his wife's absence gave him an opportunity to express to the casual foreigner his personal opinions on field-sport. "You'll load your own guns and you'll use your own legs if you shoot with me; and your dogs will do their own retrieving, too. And if anybody desires a Yankee's opinion on shooting driven birds from rocking-chairs, or potting tame deer from grandstands, they can have it right now!"

Usually nobody wanted his further opinion; and sometimes they got it and sometimes not, if his wife was within earshot. Otherwise Ferrall appeared to be a normal man, energetically devoted to his business, his pleasures, his friends, and comfortably in love with his wife. And if some considered his vigor in business to be lacking in mercy, that vigor was always exercised within the law. He never transgressed the rules of war, but his headlong energy sometimes landed him close to the dead-line. He had already breakfasted when the earliest risers entered the morning-room to saunter about the sideboards and investigate the simmering contents of silver-covered dishes on the warmers.

Into this company sauntered Siward, apparently no worse for wear. For as yet the Enemy had set upon him no proprietary insignia save a rather becoming pallor and faint bluish shadows under the eyes. He strolled about, exchanging amiable greetings, and presently selected a chilled grapefruit as his breakfast. Opposite him Mortimer, breakfasting upon his own dreadful bracer of an apple soaked in port, raised his heavy, inflamed eyes with a significant leer at the iced grapefruit. He was always ready to make room upon his own level for other men; but the wordless grin and the bloodshot welcome were calmly ignored, for as yet that freemasonry evoked no recognition from the pallid man opposite, whose hands were steady as though that morning's sun had wakened him from pleasant dreams.

Sylvia was talking to the head gamekeeper when he emerged from the house, but she saw him on the terrace and gave him a bright nod of greeting, so close to an invitation that he descended the steps and crossed the dew-wet lawn.

"I am asking Dawson to explain just exactly what a 'Shotover Drive' resembles," she said, turning to include Siward in an animated conference with the big, scraggy head keeper. "You know, Mr. Siward, that it is a custom peculiar to Shotover House to open the season with what is called a 'Shotover Drive'"

"I heard Alderdene talking about it," he said, smilingly inspecting the girl's attire of khaki with its buttoned pockets, gun-pads and Cossack cartridge loops, and the tan knee-kilts hanging heavily plaited over gaiters and little thick-soled shoes. He had never cared very much to see women afield, for, in a rare case where there was no affectation, there was something else inborn that he found unpleasant—something lacking about a woman who could take life from frightened wild things, something shocking that a woman could look, unmoved, upon a twitching, blood-soiled heap of feathers at her feet.

Meanwhile, Dawson, dog-whip at salute, stood knee-deep among his restless setters, explaining the ceremony with which Mr. Ferrall ushered in the opening of each shooting season.

"It's our own idee, Miss Landis," he said proudly; "one't a season Mr. Ferrall and his guests likes it for a mixed bag. 'Tis a sort of picnic, miss; the guns is in pairs, sixty yards apart in line, an' the rules is: Walk straight ahead, dogs to heel until first cover is reached; fire straight or to quarter, never blankin' nor wipin' no eyes; and ground game counts as feathers for the Shotover Cup."

"Oh! It's a skirmish-line that walks straight ahead?" said Siward, nodding.

"Straight ahead, sir. No stoppin', no turnin' for hedges, fences, water or rock. There is boats f'r deep water and fords marked and corduroy f'r to pass the Seven Dreens. Luncheon at one, miss—an hour's rest—then straight on over hill, valley, rock and river to the rondyvoo atop Osprey Ledge. You'll see the poles and the big nests, sir. It's there they score for the cup, and there, when the bag is counted, the traps are ready to carry you home again." . . . And to Siward: "Will you draw for your lady, sir? It is the custom."

"Are you my 'lady'?" he asked, turning to Sylvia.

"Do you want me?"

In the smiling lustre of her eyes the tiniest spark flashed out at him—a hint of defiance for somebody, perhaps for Major Belwether, who had taken considerable pains to enlighten her as to Siward's condition the night before; perhaps also for Quarrier, who had naturally expected to act as her gun-bearer in emergencies. But the gayly-veiled malice of the one had annoyed her, and the cold assumption of the other had irritated her, and she had, scarcely knowing why, turned her shoulder to both of these gentlemen with an indefinite idea of escaping a pressure amounting almost to critical importunity.

"I'm probably a poor shot?" she said, looking smilingly straight into Siward's eyes. "But if you'll take me——"

"I will with pleasure," he said. "Dawson, do we draw for position? Very well, then"—and he drew a slip of paper from the box offered by the head keeper.

"Number seven!" said Sylvia, looking over his shoulder. "Come out to the starting-line, Mr. Siward. All the positions are marked with golf-disks. What sort of ground have we ahead, Dawson?"

"Kind o' stiff, miss," grinned the keeper. "Pity your gentleman ain't drawed the meadows an' Sachem Hill line. Will you choose your dog, sir?"

"You *have* your dog, you know," observed Sylvia demurely. And Siward, glancing among the impatient setters, saw one white, heavily-feathered dog, straining at his leash, and wagging frantically, brown eyes fixed on him.

The next moment Sagamore was free, devouring his master with caresses, the girl looking on in smiling silence; and presently, side by side, the man, the girl and the dog were strolling off to the starting-line, where already people were gathering in groups, selecting dogs, fowling-pieces, comparing numbers, and discussing the merits of their respective lines of advance.

And now Ferrall was climbing into his saddle beside his pretty wife, who sat her horse like a boy, the white flag lifted high in the sunshine, watching the firing-line until the last laggard was in position.

"All right, Grace!" said Ferrall briskly. Down went the white flag; the far-ranged line started into motion straight across country, dogs at heel.

From her saddle Mrs. Ferrall could see the advance strung out far afield from the dark spots moving along the Fells boundary to the two couples traversing the salt meadows to the north. Crack! A distant report came faintly over the uplands against the wind.

"Voucher," observed Ferrall; "probably a snipe. Hark! he's struck them again, Grace."

Mrs. Ferrall, watching curiously, saw Siward's gun fly up as two big dark spots floated up from the marsh and went swinging over his head. Crack! Crack! Down sheered the black spots, tumbling earthward out of the sky.

"Duck," said Ferrall; "a double for Stephen. Lord Harry! how that man can shoot! Isn't it a pity that——"

He said no more; his pretty wife astride her thoroughbred sat silent, gray eyes fixed on the distant figures of Sylvia Landis and Siward, now shoulder-deep in the reeds.

"Was it—very bad last night?" she asked in a low voice.

Ferrall shrugged. "He was not offensive; he walked steadily enough upstairs. When I went into his room he lay on the bed as if he'd been struck by lightning. And yet—you see how he is this morning."

"After a while," his wife said, "it is going to alter him some day—dreadfully—isn't it, Kemp?"

"You mean—like Mortimer?"

"Yes—only Leroy was *always* a pig."

As they turned their horses toward the highroad Mrs. Ferrall said: "Do you know why Sylvia isn't shooting with Howard?"

"No," replied her husband indifferently; "do you?"

"No." She looked out across the sunlit ocean, grave gray eyes brightening with suppressed mischief. "But I half suspect."

"What?"

"Oh, all sorts of things, Kemp."

"What's one of 'em?" asked Ferrall, looking around at her; but his wife only laughed.

"You don't mean she's throwing her flies at Siward—now that you've hooked Quarrier for her! I thought she'd played him to the gaff——"

"Please don't be coarse, Kemp," said Mrs. Ferrall, sending her horse forward. Her husband spurred to her side, and without turning her head she continued: "Of course, Sylvia won't be foolish. If they were only safely married; but Howard is such a pill ——"

"What does Sylvia expect with Howard's millions? A man?"

Grace Ferrall drew bridle. "The curious thing is, Kemp, that she liked him."

"*Likes* him?"

"No, *liked* him. I saw how it was: she took his silences for intellectual meditation; his gallery, his library, his smatterings for expressions of a cultivated personality. Then she remembered how close she came to running off with that cashiered Englishman, and that scared her into clutching the substantial in the shape of Howard. . . . Still, I wish I hadn't meddled."

"Meddled how?"

"Oh, I told her to do it! We had talks until daylight. . . . She may marry him—I don't know—but if you think any live woman could be contented with a muff like *that!*"

"That's immoral."

"Kemp, I'm not. She'd be mad not to marry him; but I don't know what I'd do to a man like that if I were his wife. And you know what a terrific capacity for mischief there is in Sylvia. Some day she's going to love somebody. And it isn't likely to be Howard. And, oh, Kemp! I do grow so tired of that sort of thing. Do you suppose anybody will ever make decency a fashion?"

"You're doing your best," said Ferrall, laughing at his wife's pretty, boyish face turned back toward him over her shoulder. "You're presenting your cousin and his millions to a girl who can dress the part ——"

"Don't, Kemp! I don't know why I meddled! . . . I wish I hadn't ——"

"I do. You can't let Howard alone! You're perfectly possessed to plague him when he's with you, and now you've arranged for another woman to keep it up for the rest of his lifetime. What does Sylvia want with a man who possesses the instincts and intellect of a coachman? She is asked everywhere; she has her own money. Why not let her alone? Or is it too late?"

"You mean let her make a fool of herself with Stephen Siward? That is where she is drifting."

"Do you think ——"

"Yes, I do. She has a perfect genius for selecting the wrong man; and she's already sorry for this one. I'm sorry for Stephen, too; but it's safe for me to be."

"She might make something of him."

"You know perfectly well no woman ever did make anything of a doomed man. He'd kill her—I mean it, Kemp! He would literally kill her with grief. Why, just consider Sylvia for a moment. She has all the expensive training of the thoroughbred—and all the ignorance, too. She is cold-blooded because wholesome; a trifle skeptical because so absolutely unawakened. She never experienced a deep emotion. Impulses have intoxicated her once or twice—as when she asked my opinion about running off with Cavendish, and that boy-and-girl escapade with Rivington; nothing at all except high mettle, the innocent daring lurking in all thoroughbreds, and a great deal of very red blood racing through that superb young body. But" (Ferrall reined in to listen) "if ever a man awakens her—I don't care who he is—you'll see a girl you never knew, a brand-new creature emerge with the last rags and laces of conventionality dropping from her; a woman, Kemp, heiress to every generous impulse, every emotion, every vice, every virtue of all that brilliant race of hers."

"You seem to know," he said, amused and curious.

"*I* know. Major Belwether told me that he had thought of Howard as an anchor for her. It seemed a pity—Howard with all his cold, heavy, negative inertia. . . . I said I'd do it. I did. And now I don't know; I wish—almost wish I hadn't."

"What has changed your ideas?"

"I don't know. Howard *is* safer than Stephen Siward, already in the first clutches of his master-vice. Would you mate what *she* inherits from her mother and her mother's mother with what is that poor boy's heritage from the Siwards?"

"After all," observed Ferrall dryly, "we're not in the angel-breeding business."

"We ought to be. Every decent person ought to be. If they were, inherited vice would be as rare in this country as smallpox!"

She held her horse to a walk, riding forward, grave, thoughtful, preoccupied with a new problem, only part of which she had told her husband.

For that night she had been awakened in her bed to find standing beside her a white, wide-eyed figure, shivering, limbs a-chill beneath her clinging lace. She had taken the pallid visitor to her arms and warmed her and soothed her and whispered to her, murmuring the thousand little words and sounds, the breathing magic mothers use with children. And Sylvia lay there, chilled, nerveless, silent, ignorant why her sleeplessness had turned to restlessness, to loneliness, to an awakening perception of what she lacked and needed and began to desire. For that sad void, peopled at intervals through her brief years with a vague mother-phantom, had, in the new crisis of her career, become suddenly an empty desolation, frightening her with her own utter isolation. Fill it now she could not, now that she needed that ghost of child-comfort, that shadowy refuge, that sweet shape she had fashioned out of dreams to symbolize a mother she had never known.

. . . . . .

All was very well with Siward and Sylvia. They had passed the rabbit-brier country scathless, with two black mallards, a jack-snipe and a rabbit to the credit of their score, and were now advancing through that dimly-lit, enchanted land of tall gray alders where, in the sudden twilight of the leaves, woodcock after woodcock fluttered upward twittering, only to stop and drop, transformed at the vicious crack of Siward's gun to fluffy balls of feathers whirling earthward from mid-air.

Sagamore came galloping back with a soft, unsoiled mass of chestnut and brown feathers in his mouth. Siward took the dead cock, passed it back to the keeper who followed them, patted the beautiful, eager dog and signaled him forward once more.

"You should have fired that time," he said to Sylvia—"that is, if you care to kill anything."

"But I don't seem to be able to," she said. "It isn't a bit like shooting at clay targets. The twittering whir takes me by surprise—it's all so charmingly sudden—and my heart seems to stop in one beat, and I look and look, and then—whisk! the woodcock is gone, leaving me breathless ——"

Siward noiselessly sank to his knees and crouched, keen eyes minutely busy among the shadowy browns and grays of wet earth and withered leaf. And after a while, cautiously, he signaled the girl to kneel beside him, and stretched out one arm, forefinger extended.

"Sight straight along my arm," he said, "as though it were a rifle-barrel."

Her soft cheek rested against his shoulder, a stray strand of shining hair brushing his face.

"Under that bunch of fern," he whispered; "just the color of the dead leaves. Do you see? . . . *Don't* you see that big woodcock squatted flat, bill pointed straight out and resting on the leaves?"

After a long while she saw, suddenly, and an exquisite little shock tightened her fingers on Siward's extended arm.

"Oh, the feathered miracle!" she whispered; "the wonder of its cleverness to hide like that! You look and look and stare, seeing it all the while and not knowing that you see it. Then in a flash it is there, motionless, a brown-shaped shadow among shadows. . . . The *dear* little thing! . . . Mr. Siward, do you think—are you going to ——"

"No, I won't shoot it."

"Thank you. . . . Might I sit here a moment to watch it?"

She seated herself soundlessly among the dead leaves; he sank into place beside her, laying his gun aside.

"Rather rough on the dog," he said with a grimace.

"I know. It is very good of you, Mr. Siward . . . to do this for my pleasure. Oh—h! Do you see! Oh, the little beauty!"

"He'll fly the way his bill points," said Siward. "Watch!"

He rose; she sprang lightly to her feet; there came a whirring flutter, a twittering shower of sweet notes, soft wings beating almost in their very faces, a distant shadow against the sky, and the woodcock was gone.

Quieting the astounded dog, gun cradled in the hollow of his left arm, he turned to the girl beside him. "That sort of thing wins no cups," he said.

"It wins something else, Mr. Siward—my very warm regard for you."

"There is no choice between that and the Shotover Cup," he admitted, considering her.

"I—do you mean it?"

"Of course I do, vigorously!"

"Then you are much nicer than I thought you. . . . And after all, if the price of a cup is the life of that brave little bird, I had rather shoot clay pigeons. Now you will scorn me, I suppose. Begin!"

"My ideal woman has never been a life-taker," he said coolly. "Once, when I was a boy, there was a girl—very lovely—my first sweetheart. I saw her at the traps once, just after she had killed her seventh pigeon straight, 'pulling it down' from overhead, you know—very clever—the little thing was breathing on the grass, and it made sounds ——" He shrugged and walked on. "She killed her twenty-first bird straight; it was a handsome cup, too."

And after a silence, "So you didn't love her any more, Mr. Siward?"—mockingly sweet.

They laughed, and at the sound of laughter the tall-stemmed alders echoed with the rushing roar of a cock-grouse thundering skyward. Crack! Crack! Whirling over and over through a cloud of floating feathers a heavy weight struck the springy earth. There lay the big, mottled bird, splendid silky ruffs spread, dead eyes closing, a single tiny crimson bead twinkling like a ruby on the gaping beak.

"You deal death mercifully," said the girl in a low voice. "I wonder what your *ci-devant* sweetheart would think of you."

"A bungler had better stick to the traps," he assented, ignoring the badinage.

"I am wondering," she said thoughtfully, "what *I* think of men who kill."

He turned sharply, hesitated, shrugged. "Wild things' lives are brief at best—fox or flying-tick, wet nests or mink, owl, hawk, weasel or man. But the death man deals is the most merciful. Besides," he added, laughing, "ours is not a case of sweethearts."

"My argument is purely in the abstract, Mr. Siward. I am asking you whether the death men deal is more justifiable than a woman's gift of death?"

"Oh, well, life-taking, the giving of life—there can be only one answer to the mystery; and I don't know it," he replied, smiling.

"I do."

They had passed swale after swale of silver birches, waist-deep in perfumed fern and brake; the big timber lay before them. She moved forward, light gun swung easily across her leather-padded shoulder; and on the wood's sunny edge she seated herself, straight young back against a giant pine, gun balanced across her flattened knees.

"You are feeling the pace a little," he said, coming up and standing in front of her.

"The pace? No, Mr. Siward."

"Are you a trifle—bored?" She considered him in silence, then leaned back luxuriously, rounded arms raised, wrists crossed to pillow her head.

"This is charmingly new to me," she said simply.

"What? Not the open?"

"No; I have camped and done the usual roughing it with only three guides apiece and the champagne inadequately chilled. I have endured that sort of hardship several times, Mr. Siward."

In the silence the birds began to reappear. A jay screamed somewhere deep in the yellowing woods; black-capped chickadees dropped from twig to twig, cheeping inquiringly.

She sat listening, bright head pillowed in her arms, idly attentive to his low, running comment on beast and bird and tree, on forest stillness and forest sounds, on life and the wild laws of life and death governing the great out-world 'twixt sky and earth—sunlight and shadows moving, speech and silence waxed and waned. A listless contentment lay warm upon her, weighting the heavy white lids. The blue of her eyes was very dark now—almost purple, like the color of the sea when the wind-flaws turn the blue to violet.

"Did you ever hear of the Lesser Children?" she asked. "Listen then:

"'Multitudes, multitudes, under the moon they stirred!
The weaker brothers of our earthly breed; . . .
. . . All came about my head and at my feet
A thousand thousand sweet,
With starry eyes not even raised to plead;
Bewildered, driven, hiding, fluttering, mute!
. . . . . .
And I beheld and saw them one by one
Pass, and become as nothing in the night.'

"Do you know what it means?

"'Winged mysteries of song that from the sky
Once dashed long music down——'

"Do you understand?" she asked, smiling.

"'Who has not seen in the high gulf of light
What, lower, was a bird!'"

She ceased, and, raising her eyes to his: "Do you know that plea for mercy on the lesser children who die all day to-day because the season opens for your pleasure, Mr. Siward?"

"Is it a woodland sermon?" he inquired, too politely.

"The poem? No; it is the case for the prosecution. The prisoner may defend himself if he can."

"The defense rests," he said. "The prisoner moves that he be discharged."

"Motion denied," she interrupted promptly.

Somewhere in the woodland world the crows were holding a noisy session, and she told him that was the jury debating the degree of his guilt.

"Because you're guilty, of course," she continued. "I wonder what your sentence is to be?"

"I'll leave it to you," he suggested lazily.

"Suppose I sentenced you to slay no more?"

"Oh, I'd appeal——"

"No use: I am the tribunal of last resort."

"Then I throw myself upon the mercy of the court."

"You do well, Mr. Siward. This court is very merciful. . . . How much do you care for bird murder? *Very* much? Is there anything you care for more? Yes? And could this court grant it to you in compensation?"

He said, deliberately roused by the level challenge of her gaze: "The court is incompetent to compensate the prisoner or offer any compromise."

"Why, Mr. Siward?"

"Because the court herself is already compromised in her future engagements."

"But what has my—engagement to do with "

"You offered compensation for depriving me of my shooting. There could be only one compensation."

"And that?" she asked, coolly enough.

"Your continual companionship."

"But you have it, Mr. Siward "

"I have it for a day. The season lasts three months, you know."

"And you and I are to play a continuous vaudeville for three months? Is that your offer?"

"Partly."

"Then *one* day with me is not worth those many days of murder?" she asked in pretended astonishment.

"Ask yourself why those many days would be doubly empty," he said so seriously that the pointless game began to confuse her.

"Then"—she turned lightly from uncertain ground—"Then perhaps we had better be about that matter of the cup you prize so highly. Are you ready, Mr. Siward? There is much to be killed yet including time, you know "

But the hinted sweetness of the challenge had aroused him, and he made no motion to rise. Nor did she.

"I am not sure," he reflected, "just exactly what I should ask of you if you insist on taking away"—he turned and looked about him through the burnt-gold foliage—"if you took away all this out of my life."

"I shall not take it; because I have nothing in exchange to offer, . . . you say," she answered imprudently.

"I did not say so," he retorted.

"You did—reminding me that the court is already engaged for a continuous performance."

"Was it necessary to remind you?" he asked with deliberate malice.

She flushed up, vexed, silent, then looked directly at him with beautiful hostile eyes. "*What* do you mean, Mr. Siward? Are you taking our harmless, idle badinage as warrant for an intimacy unwarranted?"

"Have I offended?" he asked, so impassively that a flash of resentment brought her to her feet, angry and self-possessed.

"How far have we to go?" she asked quietly.

He rose to his feet, turned, hailing the keeper, repeating the question. And at the answer they both started forward, the dog ranging ahead through a dense growth of beech and chestnut, over a high brown ridge, then down, always down, along a leafy ravine to the water's edge—a forest pond set in the gorgeous foliage of ripening maples.

"I don't see," said Sylvia impatiently, "how we are going to obey instructions and go straight ahead. There must be a stupid boat somewhere!"

But the game-laden keeper shook his head, pulled up his hip-boots, and pointed out a line of alder poles set in the water to mark a crossing.

"Am I expected to wade?" asked the girl anxiously.

"This here," observed the keeper, "is one of the most sportin' courses on the estate. Last season I seen Miss Page go through it like a scared deer—the young lady, sir, that took last season's cup"—in explanation to Siward, who stood doubtfully at the water's edge, looking back at Sylvia.

Raising her dismayed eyes she encountered his; there was a little laugh between them. She stepped daintily across the stones to the water's edge, instinctively gathering her kilts in one hand.

"Miles and I could chair you over," suggested Siward.

"Is that fair under the rules?"

"As long as you go straight, miss," said the keeper.

So they laid aside the guns and the guide's gamesack, and formed a chair with their hands, and, bearing the girl between them, they waded out along the driven alder stakes, knee-deep in brown water.

Her arm, lightly resting around his neck, tightened a trifle as the water rose to his thighs; then the faint pressure relaxed as they thrashed shoreward through the shallows and landed among the dry reeds on the farther bank.

Miles, the keeper, went back for the guns. Siward stamped about in the sun, shaking the drops from water-proof breeches and gaiters, only to be half-drenched again when Sagamore shook himself vigorously.

"I suppose," said Sylvia, looking sideways at Siward, "your contempt for my sporting accomplishments has not decreased. I'm sorry; I *don't* like to walk in wet shoes . . . even to gain your approval." And, as the keeper came splashing across the shallows: "Miles, you may carry my gun. I shall not need it any longer——"

The upward roar of a bevy of grouse drowned her voice. Poor Sagamore, pointing madly in the blackberry thicket all unperceived, cast a dismayed glance aloft where the sunlit air quivered under the winnowing rush of heavy wings. Siward flung up his gun, heading a big quartering bird; steadily the glittering barrels swept in the arc of fire, hesitated, wavered; then the possibility passed; the young fellow lowered the gun, slowly, gravely; stood a moment motionless, with bent head, until the rising color in his face had faded.

And that was all, for a while. The astonished and disgusted keeper stared into the thicket; the dog lay quivering, impatient for signal. Sylvia's heart, which had seemed to stop with her voice, silenced in the gusty thunder of heavy wings, began beating too fast. For the ringing crack of a gunshot could have spoken no louder to her than the glittering silence of the suspended barrels; nor any promise of his voice sound as the startled stillness sounded now about her. For he had made something a trifle more than mere amends for his rudeness. He was overdoing everything—a little.

He stood on the thicket's edge, absently unloading the weapon, scarcely understanding what he had done and what he had not done.

A moment later a far hail sounded across the uplands, and against the sky figures moved distantly.

"Alderdene and Marion Page," said Siward. "I believe we lunch yonder, do we not, Miles?"

They climbed the hill in silence, arriving after a few minutes to find others already at luncheon—the Page boys, eager, enthusiastic, recounting adventure by flood and field; Rena Bonnesdel, tired and frankly bored, and decorated with more than her share of mud; Eileen Shannon, very pretty, very effective, having done more execution with her eyes than with the dainty fowling-piece beside her.

Marion Page nodded to Sylvia and Siward with a crisp, businesslike question or two, then went over to inspect their bag, nodding approbation as Miles laid the game on the grass.

"Eight full brace," she commented. "We have five, and an odd cock-pheasant—from Black Fells, I suppose. The people to our left have been blazing away like Coney Island, but Rena's guide says the ferns are full of rabbits that way, and Major Belwether can't hit fur afoot. You," she added frankly to Siward, "ought to take the cup. The birches ahead of you are full of woodcock. If you don't, Howard Quarrier will. He's into a flight of jack-snipe, I hear."

Siward's eyes had suddenly narrowed; then he laughed, patting Sagamore's cheeks. "I don't believe I shall shoot very steadily this afternoon," he said, turning toward the group at luncheon under the trees. "I wish Quarrier well—with the cup."

"Nonsense," said Marion Page curtly; "you are the cleanest shot I ever knew." And she raised her glass to him, frankly, and emptied it with the precision characteristic of her. "Your cup! With all my heart!"

"I also drink to your success, Mr. Siward," said Sylvia in a low voice, lifting her glass in the sunlight. "To the Shotover Cup—if you wish it." And as other glasses sparkled aloft amid a gay tumult of voices wishing him success, Sylvia dropped her voice, attuning it to his ear alone: "Success for the cup, if you wish it—or, whatever you wish—success!" And she meant it very kindly.

His hand resting on his glass, he sat, smiling silent acknowledgment to the noisy, generous toasts; he turned and looked at Sylvia when her low voice caught his ear—looked at her very steadily, unsmiling.

(Continued on Page 28)

"Under that Bunch of Fern," He Whispered; "Just the Color of the Dead Leaves. Do You See?"

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GEORGE HORACE LORIMER, EDITOR

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A Rare Senatorship

IT IS difficult to credit the report that, as part consideration for the settlement of the Montana copper fight, Mr. F. Augustus Heinze is to succeed to Mr. Clark's seat in the Senate. The report probably grew, by an easy but unwarranted inference, out of Mr. Clark's alleged intention to withdraw from the Upper House at the expiration of his term. The gossips of the Capital jumped to the conclusion that he would have a successor. In that case the probabilities obviously pointed to Mr. Heinze, who had more loose change than anybody else who could establish such shadowy claim of residence in the State as would be required to meet the proprieties, and who was understood to be as willing to be Senator as he had ever been to sit in any other friendly game. The report, therefore, could claim plausibility; but it seems to us that it overlooks the important contingency that Mr. Clark may decide to take his toga to New York with him. It cost him considerable worry and money. By very gradual and conservative degrees he has accustomed himself to it. Moreover, it is not only a rare garment, but there is every likelihood that it will become still rarer. Within twenty or thirty years there may not be another like it. Why should he give it up? Montana has a more tolerant and liberal-minded attitude toward her togas than almost any other State. As between handing the mantle over to Mr. Heinze and letting Mr. Clark add it to the curios in his exceedingly curious Fifth Avenue house, we cannot see that she would have anything to lose by the latter course. If one could rely upon certain ante-compromise statements concerning Mr. Heinze the State might have a lot to gain by it. On the whole, we deem the report premature.

Argument by Epithet

THE present Administration is remarkably happy in the coining of telling epithets. To the Attorney-General we are indebted for the "immunity bath," which describes in a homely American manner the only longing for cleanliness that our unregenerate trusts ever evince. The President himself has a knack of hitting off a phrase that will go whole into a newspaper headline; his latest contribution has been the celebrated "man with a muck-rake" that threatens to run the "man with a hoe" clear out of sight. Now Secretary Taft swings into line with his trenchant phrase, the "parlor Socialist." It would be hard to pack into two words more contempt from the point of view of the "man who does things" than is contained in this last epithet. The single word parlor breathes a sneer. If the Secretary of War had said the "drawing-room Socialist," or even the "kitchen" or the "barroom Socialist," we might still retain some respect for the weakling. A man might confess to socialist views in those resorts and still have some manhood in him, but from the parlor? Never!

Translated into terms of prose, what Secretary Taft means to imply by his disdainful epithet is that those men who hold certain political or social views and content themselves with talk instead of getting out and doing something are of little account in this world and entitled to little respect. The same sort of reproach is often made because professing Socialists fail to "divide up" whatever worldly goods they may have inherited or acquired in accordance with their supposed beliefs. Such slurs are based on the fallacy of thinking that men must be "doing something" all the time to prove their sincerity or their worth. Why should a Socialist make a stern profession of faith by denuding himself of his private wealth because he believes in the collective ownership of property? To whom should he hand over his goods in the present state of society? Socialism is a social theory—faith in a reorganization of society. Before that reorganization comes about, if it ever does come about, there will be many millions of just such parlor Socialists as Secretary Taft despises, and their collective convictions and utterances will make it possible for the changed conditions of society to be. A man may be a moral force without "running things." Argument by epithet is effective with a popular and unreflective audience, but it is usually unfair and fallacious.

The Lath-Sword Duo

WE WONDER how long this fiery antagonism between Senators Tillman and Spooner can continue without some shocking result. For a good while it has been one of the continuous features of the Upper House. Correspondents are pretty certain of it as a resource for the brightening of a dull session. If the stalwart Carolinian arises—and he never takes the risk of cramps from sitting still too long—the gallery pricks up its ears and looks across the aisle to see what the eloquent Wisconsan is going to do. There would be great disappointment if Senator Spooner should make one of his frequent and impressive speeches without half a dozen galling interruptions from Senator Tillman. At times they are acrimonious—that is, in moments of great passion Senator Tillman has said that Senator Spooner was temperamentally inclined to take a conservative view, and Senator Spooner, being exasperated out of self-control, has expressed the opinion that Senator Tillman's manners were abrupt to the verge of brusqueness. Then, always, both Senators have profusely apologized to each other, to the chair, to the Senate, to the press gallery, to the visitors' gallery, to the country at large, and, once more, to each other.

Personally, we have the highest regard for both Senators, feeling sure they are able, earnest, conscientious public servants, who are duly weighted with a sense of the responsibilities of their great office, and who would not, in any circumstances, interrupt public business for more than a week to twaddle pointless personalities at each other. Perhaps they suffer a little, however, from having unconsciously absorbed the views of some colleagues who think that the Senate exists solely for the benefit and pleasure of Senators.

We hope they will moderate their heat. Otherwise, in the course of another decade of this sort of continuous practice, they may work up to the point where one will actually bite his thumb at the other.

Turning of the Worm

STRANGE things are reported from Chicago. Sixteen big railroads, we are told, have formed a die-in-the-last-ditch brotherhood to compel the Farm-Implement Trust to pay the $150,000 or so of demurrage charges that it owes them. "Leading railroad officials" are alleged to declare "openly" that the Beef Trust has been beating them out of great sums by misstating the character of goods shipped, billing high-rate commodities as low-rate ones and the like. They also assert that the Glucose Trust has grossly imposed upon them, and that they are going to stop it. If these reports are true, evidently extraordinary and stirring times are in prospect in the greatest railroad centre in the world. The reports plainly indicate a turning of the worm, a rebellion of the poor and oppressed railroads against the ruthless tyranny of the big shipper. The heartless ingenuity and the infinite variety with which this tyranny has long been exercised is now a familiar story to all students of contemporaneous transportation literature.

We cannot pretend to tell what direction the rebellion will take, or whether it will succeed; but we can vouch for the rare old Colonial mettle of some of the men upon whom its fortunes must depend. The country may expect to behold Mr. Hughitt of the Northwestern reënacting the midnight ride of Paul Revere with all the ardent gallantry of the original feat. When it comes to Lexington, Mr. Ripley of the Atchison, and Mr. Earling of the St. Paul, will certainly be among the first of the embattled railroad presidents to fire a shot heard 'round the world.

The foe is numerous, well organized, and wonderfully well supplied with ammunition; but, if the roads are really going to stand upon a declaration of independence, the thin red line at Chicago will certainly give an heroic account of itself.

Too Easily Scared

IT IS the peculiar misfortune of the Bourbon mind that it cannot tell the difference between a proposal to trim its hair and one to decapitate it. Its feelings are equally hurt by either. Whatever hysteria we are now suffering from is mostly discoverable on the side of those who wish no change in existing conditions, and who think that whoever does wish a change must be out of his head. Occasionally, of course, an overwrought performer on the other side delivers himself of a fit; but, generally speaking, the clamor that is wild-eyed with unreason is a monopoly of our friends, the enemy. Harkening thereto one might erroneously infer that the country was in imminent danger of turning a somersault out of the highway of experience; that it was rapidly taking the infection of a lot of new, untried, Utopian doctrines.

This is not at all so. Disapproving thievery is really nothing new in human experience. Other peoples have done it and come out safe. Government regulation of railroad rates, municipal ownership of street-car lines, even an inheritance tax—all of these things are well within the bounds that have been marked out by practical tests. Whether any or all of them should be adopted is purely a matter of expediency that can be judged on well-tried grounds, and not at all a harebrained leap in the dark. Probably the temper of the time is revolutionary. Otherwise it must be an exceedingly stupid and unprofitable time. But it really proceeds carefully, intelligently.

To appreciate this one need look back only a short time—to the Greenback movement and the still more recent Free Silver propaganda. Both proposed essentially to create prosperity by fiat; to make people well off by giving them cheap dollars. With all this moan about departing from the solid road we may be in danger of forgetting that the gold standard was finally established by law only within the last decade, and that nobody now thinks of changing it. There is a world-wide difference between demanding that every fifty cents shall be called a dollar, and all possible demands which look simply to a freer opportunity to earn the fifty cents and a rather fairer chance of keeping it after it is earned.

The currency is a dry topic. A survey of its history among us might, however, bring some cheer to the perturbed souls who think that the country's strong predisposition is to run amuck.

The Greatest Navy

IT IS a real comfort to be told occasionally that the Elders of the Country were blockheads. So Mr. Roosevelt's recent speech, pointing out their supreme folly in failing to provide an adequate navy before the War of 1812 came along, was welcome for its own monotony-relieving self. We do not know whether the British Chancellor of the Exchequer read the speech before presenting his estimates for the ensuing fiscal year. If he did he evidently decided to brave the danger of posthumously suffering a like reproach from some statesman of the next century, for he insists that expenditures for the army and navy must be curtailed. To those of us who believe with the President this must seem a mere wanton flirtation with national destruction. But the Chancellor had something else in mind. He discovers that, since the Boer War, army and navy expenditures have increased at such a pace that, notwithstanding enlarged revenues, the Government has a "floating" or unfunded debt amounting to the tidy sum of $280,000,000—the carrying of which now and again causes a low groan of distress. And the burden seems bound to increase in exactly the proportion in which the Empire keeps ahead of the martially competing countries of Europe. As between courting ruin through not having a navy stronger than all other navies combined, and lugging ruin in bodily through national bankruptcy, the Chancellor appears to see some points in favor of the former course. What, he may argue, is the use of insuring ourselves against the losses of war if we have to "bust" ourselves to do it? Perhaps the final usefulness of a matchless armor that breaks the wearer's back is open to debate. Many people are dubious about strenuous athletics because it is so difficult to tell exactly when you have trained to a perfect condition and stop short of the one stroke more which will make you live on gruel and go in a wheeled chair ever afterward. Our national coach must be patient if we do lag a bit, and even persist in eating pie.

What is Art?

PERHAPS we should have a National Commission to determine whether or not Mr. Mansfield can act. For a long time this question appeared to be definitely settled in the affirmative—with the cordial approval and co-operation of Mr. Mansfield himself. So, season after season we cheerfully paid the extra prices in the satisfying belief that we were enjoying a superior exposition of histrionic art. But of late a number of critics of more or less authority have declared very positively that this was a mistake; that Mansfield merely thinks he can act; that all the while we have been felicitating ourselves upon elevating our taste at his performance we have been actually debasing it.

Presumably there is a Sanhedrin, a higher high priesthood, a body of electest of the elect, who really know all the time what is art and what isn't. But they have no way of getting themselves recognized. It seems that the rest of us might as well adopt Tolstoi's view that art is something which isn't—and muddle along with no higher aim than to take what happens to please us.

MEN & WOMEN

Teeth; Idle Teeth!

HARRY LEON WILSON, author of The Spenders, was domiciled for a summer in Connecticut with a colony of artists and writers, all of whom had to go into the city every day.

Wilson was doing nothing but loafing. He loafed artistically, and from time to time met and had fun with some of the natives of the place. One day he found two men in the road who seemed congenial and he struck up an acquaintance with them. He proposed a drive and they got a surrey and two horses.

"Can you drive?" asked Wilson.

"Sure," one of his sudden friends replied. "I am a fine driver."

They got aboard and started down the road. Before they had gone half a mile the team was frightened by a passing automobile and ran away. The driver valiantly steered the horses into a telephone pole and Wilson and his two friends were thrown helter-skelter into the road.

Wilson slowly gathered himself together. One of his friends was sitting in the ditch rubbing his bruises and the other stood in the middle of the road gazing in tearful misery at two front teeth which he held in the palm of his hand.

"Pretty lucky escape, wasn't it?" asked Wilson, for want of something better to say.

"Yes," replied the man with the teeth, weeping afresh, "but please, oh, please, tell me, what shall I do with these?"

Sir Chentung Liang-Cheng, the Chinese Minister, and His Attachés and Secretaries of Legation

Mr. Cortelyou's Cigar

WHEN George B. Cortelyou, now Postmaster-General, resigned as Secretary of Commerce and Labor to become chairman of the Republican National Committee and take charge of President Roosevelt's campaign, he decided he must do something to get a hail-fellow standing with the politicians he must meet.

Cortelyou had been a very busy man all his life. He had not had time to acquire any of the companionable vices, he did not drink or smoke. He knew most politicians did both. He would not drink, so he made up his mind he would smoke.

Edward Everett Hale
Chaplain of the Senate

He went into retirement for a few days and learned to smoke after a fashion, and with much distress. At the end of his experiment he could puff on a cigar with an enjoyment that was purely apparent and entirely unreal. He didn't like it. His private secretary, H. O. Weaver, was a man with the correct and abstemious habits of his chief. He never had smoked.

"Weaver," said Mr. Cortelyou one day after he had begun to smoke, "I think you must learn to smoke."

"But, Mr. Chairman," protested Weaver, "I never have smoked and I don't want to learn."

"Oh, yes, Weaver," Cortelyou insisted, "we are politicians now and we must smoke."

Poor Weaver struggled gallantly for a few days and got to a condition where he could smoke a small portion of a cigar without losing all interest in things.

When a caller came Chairman Cortelyou would offer him a cigar—and he kept very good ones—take one himself and pass the box to Weaver. "Have a cigar, Weaver," he would say.

Then both he and Weaver would light up and smoke until the visitor left. As soon as the door was closed both cigars would be thrown away. When the campaign closed Weaver rebelled.

"I'll never smoke any more," he said. And he hasn't. Nor has Cortelyou.

His Grand Tour

FRANCIS BURTON HARRISON, the former Representative from New York, and Lindsay Dennison, the writer, went to Cuba. They arrived in Havana in the middle of the tourist season and had some difficulty in getting rooms at the hotel. Finally they secured accommodations at the Telegrifo, but found it impossible to get a place for Harrison's valet, who was sent over to the Pasaje.

The name of the valet was Stanley Pinner. He had appeared on all the other hotel-registers as "And Valet," but when he got to the Pasaje he arrived at the dignity of registering for himself. Pinner was an Englishman, very English and very valety.

Harrison ran for Lieutenant-Governor in New York in 1904, on the Democratic ticket, and had an idea that the reporters would be around to see him. He had to go out one afternoon and left Dennison on guard to talk for him if the reporters came. None came. When Harrison returned to the hotel he said: "Any of the newspaper boys been around, Lindsay?"

"Not one," Dennison replied

Then they forgot about it. Next morning, when they got the Havana Post, they found nothing about themselves, but there was this paragraph: "Mr. Stanley Pinner, of New York, is at the Pasaje. He will remain in Havana for several days seeing the sights and will then continue his tour of the West Indies."

The Goose was Yanked!

THERE were some stormy times in the Congresses over which the late Speaker Crisp, of Georgia, presided, and it was occasionally necessary to invoke the authority of the sergeant-at-arms by bringing out the mace, which is his emblem of authority.

The mace is a gilded bundle of sticks, bound around with a broad band and surmounted with a saucy American eagle. When it is carried down the centre aisle of the House everybody is supposed to keep quiet or suffer the penalty.

The House was in a turmoil one day and a Southern Representative was presiding, having been called to the chair by Speaker Crisp. The veteran "Ike" Hill was acting as sergeant-at-arms.

The disturbance became so great that the temporary Speaker could do nothing. Seeing Hill in the centre aisle he commanded: "Ike, yank the goose!"

A Question of Identity

JAY DURHAM, the theatrical manager, was formerly a Washington correspondent and worked for a Minneapolis paper. He was under orders to attack James G. Blaine every day, and he carried out his instructions.

One night he received a telegram reading: "Cease your attacks on Mr. Blaine." The message was signed: "A. J. Blethen"

Durham looked at the telegram in amazement. He had never heard of Blethen and he had specific instructions. So he wired to the home office:

"Who is A. J. Blethen and what right has he to instruct me about my work?"

The answer came:

"I am A. J. Blethen. I bought this paper to-day and I no longer require your services."

For Revenue Only

OTTO VON GOTTBERG, the German journalist, went to Venezuela when the asphalt troubles were interesting. One day he made arrangements to go to the castle to talk to President Castro.

He was received by a man in a gaudy uniform, covered with gold braid. Gottberg knows a little Spanish and talked with this man about the internal and external affairs of Venezuela.

He noticed that the other gold-laced people in the room watched him curiously. Finally, one of them came to Gottberg and touched him on the shoulder.

"My friend," he said, "I can tell you of a much better one."

"Much better what?" asked Gottberg, mystified.

"Much better barber," said the gold-laced one.

"But I want no barber."

"Pardon me, sir; then why spend your time conversing with one?"

And Gottberg soon discovered that the man he had been interviewing was President Castro's barber. Castro had made him a general so he would not have to pay him out of the Castro private purse.

A Long Way Off

ONCE, when Chauncey M. Depew was making a trip through the South his train stopped to cool a hot box at a desolate little place in Arkansas. There was nothing in sight but a tumble-down station, a few stunted trees, a great expanse of red clay and a forlorn native, who stood leaning against the side of the dilapidated building.

Mr. Depew walked around a bit and then spoke to the native: "Live here?" he asked.

"Yessuh."

"Well, well," commented Depew, "I should hate to be fixed like that. This place must be a mile from God's knowledge."

"Stranger," said the native, as he shifted from one foot to the other, "it's a leetle furder nor that."

The Hall of Fame

¶ Senator Hansbrough, of North Dakota, was a reporter before he went into politics, and a good one.

¶ Secretary Shaw, of the Treasury, has six toes on each foot. So has "Slippers," the White House cat.

¶ Sir Chentung Liang-Cheng, the Chinese Minister to this country, is a baseball crank. He goes to every game when the Washingtons are at home. He used to play first base for Amherst, and it is college history that he won a tight game with a two-base hit.

¶ Amzi Smith, superintendent of the Document Room at the Capitol, has a marvelous memory. He is familiar with all the countless bills and documents for many sessions back, and can get the desired one at any time without consulting indexes or file lists.

¶ Chaplain Hale frequently plays a clerical joke on the Senate. Whenever a minister from abroad comes to visit him he invites the visitor to help him open with prayer. Thus, he has a responsive service four or five minutes long, while the Senators who happen to be in the chamber expect a half-minute prayer.

¶ Senator Bacon, of Georgia, makes one joke a year. This is the 1906 one: "Flint," he said to the Senator from California, "are you going to speak to-morrow?" "No," Flint answered. "Why do you ask?" "Because," said Bacon, "I see that Stone will speak, and I didn't know but you might also and see if, between the two, you couldn't strike a spark."

Senator Bacon
of Georgia

THE UPLIFTING OF

How Scientific Methods of Growing, Curing and Blending

ESPECIALLY WRITTEN BY

UNCLE SAM'S SMOKING OUTLAY last year was nearly $300,000,000. It included over 7,689,337,207 cigars. We have led in tobacco-growing since the day when tobacco was used as currency in Virginia. To-day we raise just six times as much as our nearest competitor, Russia, and one-fourth the world's whole crop.

This is big business. Do you wonder that Congress has been liberal with appropriations to study and improve tobacco-growing? Experts work on it constantly. Especially on cigar tobaccos, because they are our largest import item. Every improvement in domestic cigar leaf keeps money at home and builds a big home industry bigger.

So there are government lectures to growers of cigar tobacco, government soil analyses, government bulletins on fertilizers, seeds, insect pests—even a government testing machine at Washington that automatically smokes hundreds of cigars daily to determine quality.

TO IMPROVE OUR DOMESTIC CIGARS, everything pertaining to their manufacture from seed and fertilizer to finished product, has been studied over and over, again and again by experts. Results have been obtained in better crops, in finer workmanship. But until a few years ago a curious gap arose between crop and factory to depreciate the finished product.

Under a system long followed our cigar tobacco went, at precisely the most critical point in its development, into the hands of middlemen often inexperienced in handling tobacco.

The planter had raised a superior crop. The manufacturer was waiting to make it into cigars. Between them stood the old-fashioned packer and jobber upon whom fell the work of curing, ripening and aging.

Now, less is really known about these details than of any other stage in tobacco production. Closest scientific analysis can only show that curing, ripening and aging are delicate chemical changes, like the aging of fine wines, and that the utmost care is required in the process. Yet this process was left to men whose methods were, in the words of a United States government bulletin, "largely a matter of chance."

Their process was haphazard. It varied, and was never controlled. In some cases ripening was overdone, in others underdone. The highest qualities of the raw leaf were not brought out, and there was no uniformity.

While the experts of Uncle Sam's agricultural department were making their experiments, these problems of tobacco growing, curing, aging and manufacture were also receiving attention independently from the American Cigar Company. This Company's position as the largest manufacturer and distributor of cigars in the world, its enormous consumption of leaf tobacco, its many famous brands, its highly paid scientific specialists, made it not only possible to gather information as widely as the government itself, but to do what even the government could not do. For where Uncle Sam had to stop short with bulletins and recommendations of better methods for curing cigar leaf, the American Cigar Company was able to act directly upon reforms.

THROUGH A SERIES OF EXHAUSTIVE TESTS the American Cigar Company's experts analyzed every type of tobacco from all parts of the world. They tested every method of growing, harvesting, handling, curing, grading, fermenting, blending and manufacturing—and studied the effects of each.

When it became clear that all future progress in cigar manufacture depended upon bridging the gap that lay between planters and factories, that gap was filled.

The methods found to produce the best results, and the experiments which proved valuable, and the discoveries which these experiments disclosed, led to the construction of a great system of field warehouses where the raw leaf could be cured under conditions of temperature and humidity parallel to that naturally existing in Cuba, everywhere recognized as the ideal "tobacco climate."

Next, a system of "stemmeries" was added, to take the leaf after it left the field warehouses. In the "stemmeries" provision is made for sorting the tobacco into hundreds of grades and then subjecting it to an entirely new process of *blending*

These "stemmeries" of the American Cigar Company represent the only equipment of this nature in the United States.

THE BOUQUET OF A CIGAR depends on its blend. A cigar made entirely from tobacco grown in one district, for example, will lack the piquancy of true bouquet, even when the leaf is properly cured. The old-fashioned packer cured, by haphazard methods, tobacco from only a few farms as a rule. When such leaf came to the cigar-maker he made a rough blend by rolling several varieties of leaf into the same cigar. But this was only a "tobacco sandwich" at best. The next cigar he made was probably quite different in its mixture. Thus the lack of uniformity in the quality of any one brand of cigars, whatever the price. There was no way of being *exact* until the American Cigar Company found one.

Drying Process in one of the Great "Stemmeries" of the American Cigar Company

Here the cured leaf goes through another refining process of "drying" in a constant warm, humid atmosphere scientifically approximating the ideal climatic conditions of Cuba

In the American Cigar Company's "stemmeries" a very different process is employed. Such tobacco, coming from the field warehouses perfectly cured, is combined in large quantities, and then stored in rooms where the climate of Cuba is exactly duplicated. Here it remains for months—for years, if need be—the different varieties of leaf thoroughly intermingled. It ripens, it ages, gains smoothness and savor, and forms a true blend by long contact.

The American Cigar Company's far-reaching organization, and its importance as the largest purchaser of cigar leaf in the world, brings to its warehouses not only the choicest of each crop, but a range of different types that could never be assembled under old conditions. The Company's immense production of all classes of cigars consumes the entire output of the best plantations in Cuba. Its leaf experts know every acre of tobacco land in the United States, and watch the progress of each crop from week to week. Its factories produce millions of cigars of every grade, from the cheroot that sells at one cent to the domestic perfecto that costs a quarter.

Under such a system not only the choicest leaf is controlled, but even the cheapest stogie contains choice tobacco. What is rejected in

A GREAT INDUSTRY

Tobacco Leaf Have Revolutionized the Cigar Business

RICHARD WARD SNOWDON

the blend for a famous panetela can be utilized in a cigar of less cost, and yet give the latter finer material than any manufacturer could put into it under a less comprehensive plan of operation.

These scientific processes have improved the domestic cigar at least 100 per cent., giving a "mellowness," mildness, freedom from bitterness and a developed fragrance in 5c. cigars, for example, which were by no means common even in the 10c. cigar a few years ago.

Selection of Leaf Filler—Another "Stemmery" Process of the American Cigar Company

The leaf is kept in trucks, the different "blends" in different compartments of the "stemmeries." It is many times sorted and graded, and each grade assembled in trucks by itself.

The American Cigar Company believe that the possession of the largest equipment, organization, resources and business ever known in the cigar industry binds them to a public duty to give the public the best cigars possible to make. Furthermore, it is good Business Policy. The men at the head of the American Cigar Company are good enough judges of human nature to appreciate the fact that meritorious service is the best and most permanent foundation for commercial success.

If they give better cigars at lower cost than can be given by any other manufacturer, they secure, by perfectly logical and common-sense methods, what is virtually a franchise from the public to supply it with its cigars. A franchise based upon *public preference* is stronger and more enduring than any that can be secured by legislative enactment, and it is this sort of franchise, obtained in this way, that the American Cigar Company seeks—gaining success by deserving it.

Cigar smokers know what they want. Taste is constantly improving, demanding better goods all the time. There is no way of forcing people to purchase any brand of cigar which does not appeal to them on its own merit.

From the beginning, the entire force of the American Cigar Company's organization and equipment has been devoted to the problem of improving cigar quality and lowering cigar cost.

The Wire Screen Drying Trays in an American Cigar Company's "Stemmery"

Cigar leaf is very fragile and tender and must be handled with great care. Throughout all the prepara ry processes the temperature is kept at exact degrees.

THE UNMISTAKABLE IMPROVEMENTS thus brought about have been demonstrated to the smoking public with ever-increasing emphasis by the appearance of brand after brand of cigars selling at 5c. possessing a superiority which has made them instantly popular and permanently successful. These are of different brand-names and of different characteristics, but are all marked with the "▲" (Triangle A) merit mark and possess the fundamental qualities of fragrance and matured "ripeness" for which the "▲" (Triangle A) always stands.

This "▲" (Triangle A) is the American Cigar Company's merit mark. Behind it is the entire power, knowledge, energy and organization of this great corporation.

The smoker is safe in accepting the "▲" (Triangle A) mark, wherever he sees it, as an invariable and positive guarantee of the following cigar qualities:

FIRST—Freedom from "rankness" or bitterness, due to the new processes of ripening which develop the full fragrance of the leaf.

SECOND—Uniformity of quality, obtained by exclusive methods of grading and blending which substitute accuracy for the old style haphazard tobacco-mixing

THIRD—Smoothness, "mellowness" and fragrance obtained through scientific processes of ripening in the blend for two years before manufacture

FOURTH—Slow and even burning, due to the care and supervision exercised in the manufacture of cigars and in the use of thoroughly ripened tobacco

FIFTH—Perfect condition—if the dealer has done his part. Cigars in boxes marked with this "▲" (Triangle A) are in perfect smoking condition when delivered to the dealer—thoroughly matured. It is his part to keep them right—yours to insist that he does so.

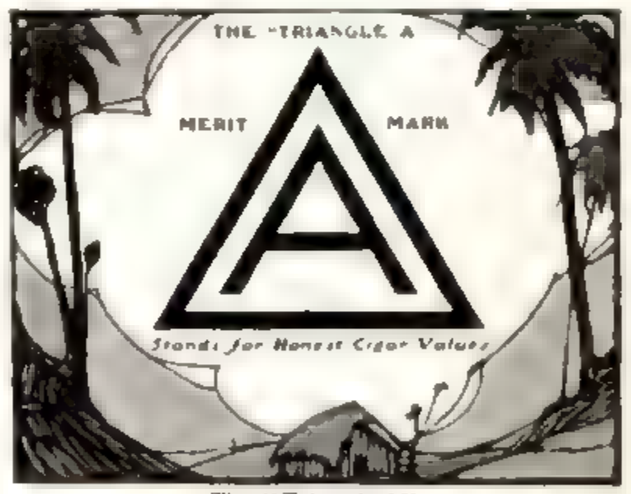
The products of the American Cigar Company's various factories include every variety of cigars—from the little cigar such as the "Royal Bengals" at 10-for-15c. to the highest type of "Seed and Havana."

No one cigar is expected to suit all tastes

The leading brands of the American Cigar Company are distinguished by this "▲" (Triangle A) merit mark, just as a soldier is rewarded for superior merit by the Victoria Cross.

Among the "Triangle A" brands each smoker is sure to find the cigar he wants. The list is so long that only a few of the more prominent can be mentioned here:

The New Cremo (Victorias), Anna Held, George W. Childs (Cabinets), Buck, Spanaflora, Tarita, Stickney's New Tariff, Cubanola, The Continental, Chancellor, Caswell Club. The Unico, Benefactor, Cap't Marryat, Roxboro, General Braddock, Orlando. And the Palma De Cuba and Isle of Pines.



The "Triangle A"

which distinguishes all cigars benefiting by these modern methods of manufacture

"Triangle A" brands offer the widest obtainable range of choice and absolutely dependable quality in whatever brand suits your taste.

The American Cigar Company has in many cases reduced the cost of long-established brands. But in every instance, by its magnificent organization, the brands bearing the "Triangle A" have been immeasurably improved in quality and dependability, and without so much as a penny's increase in cost per hundred to the consumer. It is imperative, therefore, that every intelligent and fastidious smoker take the pains to look for this "▲" (Triangle A) merit mark whenever he buys cigars. It is the smoker's guarantee that he is obtaining the *cleanest, the least expensive and the highest grade goods that America produces in a luxury in which she leads the world*

The Saturday Evening Post Advertiser

THE NOOSE

(Concluded from Page 5)

pie and ice cream, and when they shoved back and lighted the cigars which Lester had provided with prodigal hand, they all agreed that the barbecue was "up to the bills."

The ceremony at three was short, almost hurried, so great was the bustle about the house and yard. Fan wore no veil and George Adelbert made no change from the neat sack-suit which he had put on at rising. At the close of the clergyman's blessing he was called upon for a second time to pump the hard hands and stringy arms of his neighbors as they filed by to bid them both a hearty God-speed.

After this painful procession was ended Fan dragged him away to the bower where the young folks were already dancing with prodigious clatter. "How young she is!" he exclaimed as he saw her mix with the crowd of tireless, stamping, prancing cowboys.

As the dance went on he grew furious with her lack of reserve, her indelicacy. Her good-natured laughter with the men who crowded about her familiarly was a kind of disloyalty. She seemed at times to be exchanging doubtful jests with them; and at last, to protect her from the results of her own fatuity, he danced with her himself, danced almost incessantly, notwithstanding the heat and the noise.

At sunset they all returned to the tables and ate up what remained of the ox and the pies.

Lester was well enough acquainted with these rough youths to know that some devilry was preparing, and already furious with his bride and distrustful of his future his self-command at last gave way. Drawing Fan out of the crowd he said sternly:

"I've had enough of this! I'm having Aglar harness the buckskins into the red cart and I want you to go to the house and pack a few things—we're going to Limone to catch the early train for Denver."

"We can't do that, Dell; we got to stay here and feed this gang once more."

"Oh, hang the gang! I'm sick of them. Get ready, I tell you! Who cares what these beggars think?"

She laughed: "You're jealous of them." Then, rising to his passion, she answered: "All right, I'll sneak some clothes into a bag and we'll slide out and leave the gang."

A half-hour later they stole away toward the back of the garden and out upon the prairie where a Mexican was holding a spirited team. Fan was giggling so hard that she was barely able to lift the valise which she carried in her hand. "Don't you tell," she said to the Mexican. "If they ask, say we went to Holcombe."

"All right. I *sabe*," the Mexican replied. Even as he spoke the music in the bower ceased and voices were heard in question.

Fan sobered. "They've missed us already."

Lester took the reins. "Send 'em south, Aglar," and at his chirp the team sprang forward out upon the road, into the coolness and silence of the midnight plain.

Fan, clutching Lester's arm, shook with laughter. "It's like eloping—ain't it?"

The tone of her voice irritated him. "Good Heavens! how vulgar she is! And she is my wife," was his thought—and he took no pleasure in her nearness.

Wild whoops reached them from the ranch house now hid in the valley behind them, and a few moments later the yells broke out again perceptibly nearer.

"They're after us!" cried Fan, vastly excited and pleased. "It's a race now," and, catching the whip from his hand, she lashed the horses into a gallop.

He said: "I'll turn into the Sun-Fish Trail; we'll throw 'em off the track."

"No use," she laughed. "No use, Dell, they can read a trail like Injuns; besides, they're overtaking us. We might as well turn and go back."

His only answer was a shout to the horses. He was burning with fury now. All his hidden contempt, his concealed hatred of the vulgarians behind him filled his heart. It was like them, the savages, to give chase.

With shrill whoops in imitation of Comanches the cowboys came on, riding their swift and tireless ponies; like skimming hawks they swept down the swells, and the bride, clinging to her husband's arm, called each of them by his name. "Link Compton is in the lead—pull up!" She reached a firm hand and laid it on the lines. "Pull up, Dell; it's no use."

He tried to shake off her grasp, but could not. Her voice changed to command. "Don't be a fool!" she called sharply, and laying both hands upon the reins she brought the horses into a trot in spite of his furious objection, just as the first of the pursuing cowboys rode alongside, and seizing one of the horses by the bit cried out:

"Come back; we need you!"

Even as he spoke a whistling rope settled round the fleeing couple, and the team came to a stand, surrounded by a hooting mob of mounted men. The noose tight-drawn was like a steel embrace, and Compton called:

"Thought you'd give us the slip, did ye? Well, I don't think!"

"Leave us alone, you ruffians," shouted Lester, "or it'll be the worse for you!"

They all laughed at this and Compton drew the rope tighter, pinning Lester's arms to his side.

"Boys ——" began Fan in appeal, but she got no further. Lester, wrenching his right arm loose, began to shoot. What happened after that no one ever clearly knew, but the team sprang wildly forward, and Compton's pony reared and fell backward and the bride and groom were thrown violently to the ground.

When Fan opened her eyes she saw the big stars above her and felt a sinewy arm beneath her head. Compton was fanning her with his hat and calling upon her to speak, his voice agonized with fear and remorse.

Slowly it all came back to her, and struggling to a sitting position she called piteously: "Dell, where are you? Dell!" Her voice rose in fear, a tone no man had ever heard in it before. She staggered to her feet and dazedly looked about her. A group of awed, silenced, dismounted men stood not far away and on the ground, lying in a crumpled, distorted heap, was her husband. With a shriek of agony she fell on her knees beside him, calling upon him to open his eyes, to speak to her.

Then at last, as the conviction of his death came to her, she lifted her head and with a voice of level, hoarse-throated hate she imprecated her murderers. "I'll kill you, every one of you! I'll kill you for this—you cowardly wolves—I'll kill ——"

V

THEY lifted them both up for dead, and Compton, taking Fan in his strong arms, held her like a child as they drove slowly back to the ranch. All believed Lester dead; but Compton, who held his ear to Fan's lips, insisted that she was breathing, and indeed she recovered from her swoon before they reached the house.

Blondell, more powerfully moved than ever before in his life, after a swift curse upon the culprits, took his girl to his bosom and carried her to her bed.

As her brain cleared, Fan rose and, staggering across the room, took her husband's head in her arms. "Bring some water. Dell is hurt—don't you see he is hurt? Be quick!"

"Has somebody gone for the doctor?" asked the mother, to whom this was the raving of dementia. "Somebody go."

No one had, for all believed the man to be dead, but Compton exclaimed, "I'll go!"—turning to vault his horse, glad of something to do—eager to escape the sight of Fan's agonized face.

The dash of cold water on his bruised face brought a flutter of life to Lester's eyelids, and in triumph the bride cried out: "I told you so! He is alive! Oh, Dell, can't you speak to me?"

He could not so much as lift his eyelids, but his breathing deepened, and with that sign of returning vitality Fan was forced to be content. She was perfectly composed now and helped to bathe his crushed and bleeding head and his broken shoulder with a calmness very impressive to all those who were permitted to glance within the room.

Slowly the guests departed. The cowboys, low-voiced and funereal of mien, rode away in groups of three or four.

The doctor came, hurrying down the slope about ten of the morning, his small roan mustang galloping, his case of instruments between his feet. He was very young, and luckily very self-confident, and took charge of "the case" with thrilling authority.

"The coma was induced," he explained, "by the concussion of the brain. The shoulder is also badly contused and the collar-bone broken—but if brain fever does not set in the man will live. The treatment so far as it has gone is admirable."

Compton returned with him, or a little before him, and seemed to be waiting for arrest. He was a lean, brown young fellow with good, gray eyes and a shapely nose. "Yes, I threw the rope," he confessed to every one. "It was all in fun, but he shot my horse, and as he reared up he jerked the people out of the buggy. I guess the broncos jumped ahead at the same time. But it was my fault. I had no business to rope 'em. In fact, we had no business chasing 'em up at all."

At last Blondell gruffly told him to go home. "If the man dies we'll come after you," he added with blunt ferocity.

"All right," responded the young fellow with lofty spirit. "I'll be there—but I want to see Fan a moment before I leave. I want to know if there is anything I can do for her or him."

Blondell was for refusing this utterly, but his wife said: "You didn't mean nothing, Link—I'm sure of that—and I've always liked you, and so has Fan. She won't lay it up against you, I know. I'll tell her you're here."

Fan, sitting beside Lester's bed, turned at her mother's word and saw the young fellow standing in the doorway in mute appeal. Her glance was without anger, but it was cold and distant. She shook her head and the young rancher turned away shaken with sobs. That look was worse than her curse had been.

From the dim, gray region of his delirium and his deathlike unconsciousness George Lester struggled slowly back to life. His reawakening was like a new birth. He seemed born again, this time an American—a Western American. In the measure of a good old homely phrase, some sense (a sense of the fundamental oneness of humanity) had been beaten into his head.

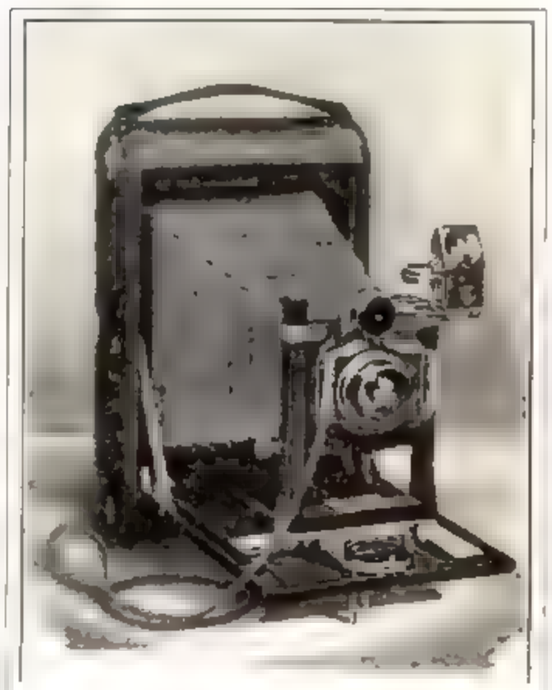
As he lay there helpless and suffering he was first of all aware of Fan, whose face shone above him like the moon, and was soon able to understand her unwearying devotion and to remember that she was his wife. She was always present when he woke and he accepted her presence as he accepted sunshine, knowing nothing of the sleeplessness and toil which her attendance involved—a knowledge of this came later.

At times, gruff old Blondell himself bent his shaggy head above his bed to ask how he felt, and no mother could have been more considerate than Mrs. Blondell. "What right have I to despise these people?" he asked himself one day. "What have I done to lift myself above them?" (and this question extended to the neighbors, to the awkward ranchers who came stuffily and with a sort of awe into his room to "pass a good word," as they said). "They are a good sort, after all"—his heart prompted him to admit.

But his deepest penitence, his tenderest gratitude rose to Fan, whom care and love had marvelously refined. He was able to forget her careless speech and to look quite through her untidy ways to the golden, good heart which beat beneath her unlovely gowns. Nothing was too hard, too menial for her hands, and her smile warmed his midnight sick-room like sunshine.

He was curiously silent even after his strength was sufficient for speech. Content to lie on his bed and watch her as she moved about him, he answered only in monosyllables, while the deep current of his love gathered below his reticence. As he came to a full understanding of what he had been and to a sense of his unworthy estimate of her and her people, his passion broke bounds. "Fan!" he called out one morning, "I'm not fit to receive all your care and devotion—but I'm going to try to be. I'm going to set to work in earnest when I get up. Your people shall be my people, your cares my cares." He could not go on, and Fan, who was looking down at him in wonder, stooped and laid a kiss on his quivering lips.

"You get well, boy; that's all you need to worry about," she said, and her face was very sweet—for she smiled upon him as if he were a child.



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MORTMAIN

(*Continued from Page 7*)

there's one more bit of evidence that nails you. You can't escape. You're done. I've got you—*the murderer's thumb-marks on the glass!*"

"The devil take you!" yelled Mortmain, the blood suffusing his eyes.

"The devil has *you* already!" retorted Flaggs. "He's part of you. You *are* the devil. Whose hand is that? Tell me that! *Whose hand is that?*"

Mortmain turned an agonized face toward his tormentor. His spirit was gone. He was ready to fall upon his knees, but he could not move. He raised his left hand pitifully as if to shield himself from the coming blow, and yet his parched lips uttered the soundless word:

"Whose?"

Flaggs gave a dry laugh.

"*It belonged to Saunders Leach!*"

With a sickening of the heart the baited baronet realized for the first time the terrible alternative which confronted him. Should he seek to disprove the circumstantial evidence which pointed to him as the murderer of Lord Russell he must needs confess himself guilty of another and almost as heinous a crime—murder as the result of mutilation. Was ever rat so nicely trapped? The horror of the thing turned Mortmain into a madman. He sprang at the clerk in a delirium of rage, and his right hand clutched Flaggs tightly by the throat and its blunt fingers twisted into the flesh deeper and deeper. It was done so quickly that the clerk was unable to escape. His eyes started forward, his tongue protruded, and his mouth frothed as he made ineffectual attempts to break the baronet's hold.

"You've got me, eh?" muttered Mortmain, gritting his teeth. "I think not, Mr. Flaggs!"

The door opened and Joyce entered in much agitation. The orchestra had burst into a triumphant march and the sounds of many footsteps echoed in the hall outside.

"Everybody is arrivin', Sir Richard!" exclaimed the butler, "an' Lady Bella has gone into the music-room. His Grace of Belvoir was just askin' for you. Here are two gentlemen who wish to see you important, sir." He held the door open and two men in Inverness coats entered and stood irresolutely near the door.

Mortmain released his grasp upon the neck of Flaggs, who stumbled toward the lounge in the corner behind a table and fell there motionless.

"Sir Richard Mortmain?" inquired the taller of the two, a man of massive build and with iron-gray mustache and hair.

"The same," replied Mortmain, his fingers still twitching from the ferocity of his clutch upon the clerk.

The two strangers bowed.

"We have a card to you from Lieutenant Foraker—a friend of yours, I believe. Permit me," and the tall man stepped forward and extended a card to the baronet.

Mortmain mechanically took it between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. It felt like celluloid and a trifle slippery. But the stranger did not release his own hold upon it.

"Pardon me, I have given you the wrong card," he exclaimed apologetically, and withdrawing the bit of board from Mortmain's fingers he opened a wallet and fumbled with the contents. As he did so he handed the first card to his companion, who stepped into the light of the lamp, and examined it carefully through a small microscope which he drew from his pocket.

"It is *the same*," remarked the stranger of the microscope to the iron-gray man.

"What is all this?" cried Mortmain in an unnatural voice. His head swam. On the mantel the verdigris-covered dragon's face grinned mockingly at him—it was the face of Flaggs.

"Sir Richard," replied the iron-gray man gravely, "I am Inspector Murtha, of Scotland Yard."

Mortmain started back and his right hand twitched again. Through the silence came the measures of The Flower Song.

"I regret to say," continued the other, "that it is my most unpleasant duty to arrest you for the murder of Lord Gordon Russell."

At the same instant the veil of Sir Richard's mental temple was rent in twain; out of a blackness so intense that it seemed substantive he saw the two inspectors from Scotland Yard fleeing away and diminishing in size until they seemed but puppets gesturing at the edge of an infinity of white desert; then with equal velocity they were carried forward again, growing bigger and bigger until they loomed like giants in his immediate foreground swinging huge cimitars and waving their arms frantically; the strains of the violins changed to voices shouting so sharply that they pained his ears, and waves of light and cosmic darkness over which scintillated a dazzling aurora followed one another in startling succession, until suddenly his soul, shot out of a tunnel, as it were, landed abruptly in a warm meadow covered with daisies, which dissolved before his eyes into the familiar chamber on Milbank Street. A gray mist floated hissing up through the ceiling, the chairs rocked with a strange rotary swing, and the two inspectors smiled cheerfully at him through a broad and painful band of London sunshine. He swallowed rapidly, and a horrible faintness seized him which gave place to a queer sort of anger.

"There's—some—mistake!" he stuttered. The chairs anchored themselves and the ceiling assumed its normal tint.

"No mistake at all," replied Sir Pennston Crisp.

The problem was too much for the baronet and he gave it up. The murderer's hand no longer twitched, but it loomed white and loathsome from the bed before him, as if dead already, somehow—part of a—yes—what were those things? Bandages?

Crisp and Jermyn saw a look of agonized bewilderment pass over the baronet's face.

"Did they bring me here from the Old Bailey?" he asked. "Am I out on bail?"

Crisp laughed.

"That's one way of putting it," he remarked. "Yes, you're out on bail, and in another second or two you will be entirely free."

"I'm glad you're going to take that thing off again," said Mortmain. "How could you have done it?"

"It's all right," returned Crisp soothingly.

Then Mortmain suddenly understood. But he waited shrewdly.

"What day is this?" he asked in an innocent manner.

"December 5," replied Jermyn.

"When did I have that fall; you know—the one that made it necessary for you to amputate?"

"Your accident happened yesterday evening, but there is no necessity for amputation," returned Crisp. "Now, my dear fellow, just lie back, will you?—and don't ask questions. That somni-chloride is still lingering in your head. I shall have to be going in a minute."

Mortmain obeyed the surgeon's instructions, but he was hard at work thinking the thing out logically. There had been no amputation, no arrest, no inspectors from Scotland Yard. That scene with Flaggs, horribly distinct as it still was, had had no actuality. But where did fact end and illusion begin? Had the notes been taken? Had there been a murder? Was he a bankrupt? The different propositions entangled themselves helplessly with one another. At the end of a minute he asked deliberately:

"Miss Fickles, did a man take some papers from my table this morning?"

"Yes, Sir Richard," replied the nurse.

Mortmain's heart sank.

"Er—was—did anything happen to Lord Russell?" he asked the surgeon faintly.

"Yes. But don't talk or think of it, Mortmain. I order you! Do you understand?"

A ripple of perspiration broke out on his forehead and it seemed as if a film had rolled off his vision. Of course, he had taken the chloride just after Miss Fickles had gone downstairs for him, and then Crisp and Jermyn had come. He had felt so miserable! And now he felt so much better! He opened his eyes the same Sir Richard that had inhaled the anesthetic so obediently.

"I am quite myself now, Sir Pennston," he asserted quietly. "I want to ask one more question. "Flynt was not here, was he?"

"No, of course not."

"And we have not left the room? No railroad trip, eh?"

"No."

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"Thank you," said the baronet. "May I have a cup of coffee?"

What reply this preposterous demand would have invited will never be known, for at that moment a knock came upon the door and Joyce asked if Sir Richard could see Mr. Flynt.

"I *must* see him!" said Mortmain.

"Oh, very well!" laughed Crisp. "You're getting better rapidly."

Flynt entered with a breezy manner which he allowed himself to assume only when something really desirable had definitely occurred.

"Good-morning, Sir Penniston! Good-morning, Sir Richard!" he remarked without sitting down. "I really had to come in and tell you the good news. The executors have just read Lord Russell's will——"

"Mr. Flynt! Mr. Flynt!" interrupted Sir Penniston.

"Oh, it's all right!" continued Flynt with a laugh. "Better than a tonic. You see, Fowler, the only next of kin, was just sailing for New Guinea, and it had to be done at once. I really did Lord Russell an injustice. May I speak before these gentlemen?"

"Certainly," whispered Mortmain, his eyes fastened feverishly upon the lawyer.

"Well, to put it briefly, he has made you a great gift! Here, read it!" and he handed the baronet a typewritten sheet. Mortmain read it eagerly, although his eyes pained him somewhat:

To my friend, Sir Richard Mortmain, I devise and bequeath the sum of five thousand pounds, and take it upon myself to express the earnest hope that he will before long publish his views upon art in such a form that the public at large may have the opportunity to profit by that which hitherto has been the privilege of the few. I desire, moreover, to express my high personal regard for him and my admiration for his whole-souled devotion to the arts, and I hereby instruct my executors to cancel and destroy all evidences of indebtedness owing to me by said Mortmain and to treat said indebtedness as null, void and of no effect, provided, nevertheless, that within six months of my demise said Mortmain shall assign to the directors of the Corporation of the British Museum all his collections of ceramics, bronzes, china, chronometers, scarabs, including the Howard Collection, his cabinets of gems and cameos, including the famous head of Alexander on an onyx of two strata and the *altissimo relievo* on cornelian Jupiter Aegiochus—the four paintings by Watteau in his music-room, and the paintings by Corot and Whistler from his library. As the said moneys borrowed from me from time to time by said Mortmain were, to my knowledge, principally made use of by him for the purpose of purchasing and enlarging said collections, which have increased in value to no inconsiderable extent since he acquired them by virtue of his care and discrimination, I am prepared to regard said loans to him in effect as gifts impressed with a trust in favor of our National Museum, provided, however, that said Mortmain is prepared to accept the same and execute the terms thereof as heretofore set forth within six months; but nothing herein shall be taken to affect the right of said Mortmain to take up and pay off said indebtedness within said time, if he shall see fit to do so, in which case the provisions of this codicil shall be without any force or effect whatsoever, save that I instruct my executors to receive said moneys and hold the same in trust, however, for such scientific and artistic uses as said Mortmain shall direct, preference being given to the needs of the British Museum along the lines of antique works of art and Egyptology.

As Sir Richard laid down the paper his eyes filled and he turned away his head.

"A good old man!" said Flynt reverently.

"Indeed he was!" assented Crisp.

"I must know one thing," whispered Mortmain after a few moments. "Did you send your clerk here this morning to get some papers?"

"Yes, to be sure. I had almost forgotten. I sent Flagga after an envelope which I fancied I dropped last evening," answered the lawyer.

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"Which *you* had dropped?" asked Mortmain stupidly.

"Why, certainly. I had your papers here. Flaggs brought 'em—and I dropped an envelope. I *did* drop it, because Flaggs found it this morning."

"What was in it?" asked Sir Richard eagerly.

Flynt elevated his brows.

"Why, if you don't mind my speaking of it, there were some old notes of yours which had been renewed at various times. I make a practice of keeping the originals as a matter of precaution."

"Oh!" sighed Mortmain. "*Old* notes?"

"*Old* notes," answered Flynt. "Notes taken up and renewed by others."

"Ah!" sighed Mortmain again. "You *did* drop them, but not in the study. I found them on the street. They gave me quite a turn."

"Well, we will tear them up now," laughed Flynt.

"Pardon me, sir," said Joyce, opening the door and handing a long box to Miss Fickles; "some roses with Lady Bella Forsythe's compliments, and 'opin' as 'ow you'll soon be all right again, sir."

(THE END)

THREE OF "THE FINEST"

(Concluded from Page 10)

The Italian raised himself on the uninjured arm and looked at him steadily.

"Did Phelan put you up to do it?" he asked.

"He did not, Tony. What's more, he gave me old hallelujah when I told him."

"You had no business to do such a thing," was the sullen response, and Mountri lay back on the stretcher.

The Irishman bit his lip at the rebuff. There was silence for a moment.

"Tony," resumed the patrolman with diplomatic enthusiasm, "you certainly did put up a dandy fight! The papers'll be full of it."

The compliment went straight to the Italian's heart. "You're no slouch yourself, Tim," he answered, half reluctantly. Then he seized the outstretched hand and shook it heartily.

"Striking a superior officer," commented the Deputy Commissioner, "is a very grave offense, and the punishment would, ordinarily, be dismissal from the Force. But in view of your recent brave conduct in succoring the same roundsman whom you assaulted, and also because of his earnest representations in your behalf, I will let you off with a fine of two days. I also wish to commend you both for conspicuous bravery. The matter will be brought to the attention of the Board."

Phelan, who was in the courtroom, came over and shook hands with both the complainant and the defendant. While they were talking Sheldon approached, seized the acting captain in a mighty grasp and literally hugged him until, breathless and groaning, he begged aloud for mercy.

"Gosh, but it feels good to see you again, Jim!" exclaimed the giant. Then he turned to Horigan. "You can go into that exam. for roundsman, Tim," he whispered. "Your fine has been remitted—the ten days."

Phelan overheard him, and nodded at Kitty, who stood near the railing, smiling and crying at once.

"Order in the court!" shouted the complaint clerk. Sheldon grasped his friend and led him outside the railing, Tim and Mountri following behind them.

"Stop staring at that girl, you old rake!" admonished the detective sergeant. Phelan's only response was a deep sigh.

"Isn't he the lucky Mick?" he asked aloud, and then brought Sheldon over to be introduced.

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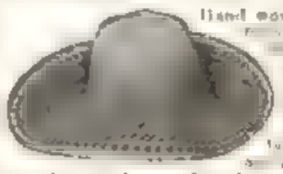

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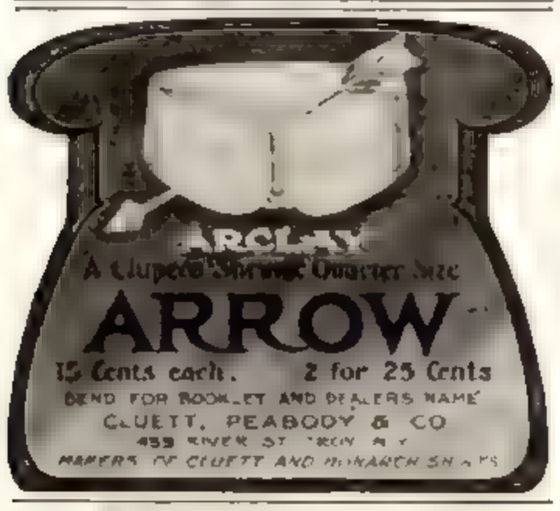
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THE FIGHTING CHANCE

(Continued from Page 13)

Then to the others, brightening again, he said a word or two, wittily, with a gay compliment well placed and a phrase to end it in good taste. And, in the little gust of hand-clapping and laughter, he turned again to Sylvia, smilingly, saying under his breath: "As though winning the cup could compensate me now for losing it!"

She leaned involuntarily nearer. "You mean that you will not try for it?"

"Yes."

"That is not fair—to me!"

"Why not?"

"Because—because I do not ask it of you."

"You need not, now that I know your wish."

"Mr. Siward, I—my wish ——"

Then Marion Page took possession of him so exclusively, so calmly, that something in her cool certainty vaguely irritated Sylvia, who had never liked her.

"Stephen," called out Alderdene, anxiously counting the web loops in his khaki vest, "what do you call fair shooting at these ruffed grouse? You needn't be civil about it, you know."

"Five shells to a bird is *good* shooting," answered Siward.

"*You* have a better score, Mr. Siward," said Marion Page, with a hostile glance at Alderdene, who had not made good.

"That was chance—and this year's birds. I've taken ten shells to an old drummer in hard wood or short pines." He smiled to himself, adding: "A drove of six in the open got off scot-free a little while ago. Miss Landis saw it."

That he was inclined to turn it all to banter relieved her at once. "It was pitiable," she nodded gravely to Marion; "his nerve left him when they made such a din in the briers."

Miss Page glanced at her indifferently.

"What I need is practice like the chasseurs of Tarascon," admitted Siward.

"I willingly offer my hat, monsieur," said Sylvia.

Marion Page, impatient to start, had turned her tailor-made back to the company, and was instructing his crestfallen lordship very plainly: "You fire too quickly, Blinky; two seconds is what you must count when a grouse flushes. You must say 'Mark! Right!' or 'Mark! Left! —Bang!'"

"I might as well say 'Bang!' for all I've done to-day," he muttered, adjusting his shooting-goggles and snapping his eyes. Then exploding into raucous laughter he moved off southward with Marion Page, who had exchanged a swift handshake with Siward; the twins followed, convoying Eileen and Rena, neither maiden excitedly enthusiastic. And so the luncheon party, lord and lady, twins and maidens, guides and dogs, trailed away across the ridge, distant silhouettes presently against the sky, then gone. And after a little while the far, dry, accentless report of smokeless powder announced that the opening of the season had been resumed, and that the Lesser Children were dying fast in the glory of a perfect day.

"Are you ready, Mr. Siward?" She stood waiting for him at the edge of the thicket.

So he walked forward beside her into the dappled light of the thicket.

Within a few minutes the dog stood twice; and twice the whirring twitter of woodcock startled her, echoed by the futile crack of his gun.

"Beg pardon, sir ——"

"Yes, Miles?" with a glint of humor.

"Overshot, sir—excusin' the liberty, Mr. Siward. Both marked down forty yard to the left if you wish to start 'em again."

"No," he said indifferently, "I had my chance at them. They're exempt, Miles; my nerve is gone. Such things happen. I'm all in. Come over here, my friend, and look at the sun with me."

The discomfited keeper obeyed.

"Where ought that refulgent luminary to scintillate when I face Osprey Ledge?"

"Sir?"

"The sun. How do I hold it?"

"On the p'int of your right shoulder, sir. . . . You ain't quittin', Mr. Siward, sir?" anxiously. "That Shotover Cup is easy yours, sir!" eagerly. "Wot's a miss on a old drummer, Mr. Siward? Wot's twice overshootin' cock, sir, when a blind dropper can see you are the cleanest, fastest, hard-shootin' shot in the hull country?"

But Siward shook his head with an absent glance at the dog, and motioned the astonished keeper forward.

"Line the easiest trail for us," he said; "I think we are already a trifle tired. Twigs will do in short cover; use a hatchet in the big timber. . . . And go slow till we join you."

And when the unwilling and perplexed keeper had started, Siward, unlocking his gun, drew out the smooth, yellow cartridges and pocketed them.

Sylvia looked up as the sharp, metallic click of the locked breech rang out.

"*Why* do you do this, Mr. Siward?"

"I don't know; really, I am honest! I don't know."

"It could not be because I ——"

"No, of course not," he said, too seriously to reassure her.

"Mr. Siward"—in quick displeasure.

"Yes?"

"What you do for your amusement cannot concern me."

"Right as usual," he said, so gayly that a reluctant smile trembled on her lips.

"Then why have you done this? It is unreasonable—if you don't feel as I do about killing things that are having a good time in the world."

He stood silent, absently looking at the fowling-piece cradled in his left arm. "Shall we sit here a moment and talk it over?" he suggested listlessly.

Her blue gaze swept him; his vague smile was indifferently bland.

"If you are determined not to shoot, we might as well start for Osprey Ledge," she suggested; "otherwise, what reason is there for our being here together, Mr. Siward?"

Awaiting his comment—perhaps expecting a counter-proposition—she leaned against the tree beside which he stood. And after a while, as his absent-minded preoccupation continued:

"Do you think the leaves are dry enough to sit on?"

He slipped off his shooting-coat and placed it at the base of the tree. She waited for a second, uncertain how to meet an attitude that seemed to take for granted matters which might, if discussed, give her at least the privilege of yielding. However, to discuss a triviality meant forcing emphasis where none was necessary. She seated herself; and, as he continued standing, she stripped off her shooting-gloves and glanced up at him inquiringly: "Well, Mr. Siward, I am literally at your feet."

"Which redresses the balance a little," he said, finding a place near her.

"That is very nice of you. Can I always count on you for civil platitudes when I stir you out of your day-dreams?"

"You can always count on stirring me without effort."

"No, I can't. Nobody can. You are never to be counted on; you are too absent-minded. Like a veil you wrap yourself in a brown study, leaving everybody outside to consider the pointed flattery of your withdrawal. What happens to you when you are inside that magic veil? Do you change into anything interesting?"

He sat there, chin propped on his linked fingers, elbows on knees; and though there was always the hint of a smile in his pleasant eyes, always the indefinable charm of breeding in voice and attitude, something now was lacking. And after a moment she concluded that it was his attention. Certainly his wits were wool-gathering again; his eyes, edged with the shadow of a smile, saw far beyond her, far beyond the sunlit shadows where they sat.

"Enchantment!" she said, under her breath. "Surely an enchanted sleeper lies here somewhere."

"You," he observed—"unawakened."

"Asleep? I?" She looked around at him. "*You* are the dreamer here. Your eyes are full of dreaming even now. What is your desire?"

He leaned on one arm, watching her; she had dropped her ungloved hand, searching among the newly-fallen gold of the birch leaves drifted into heaps. On the third finger a jewel glittered; he saw it, conscious of its meaning—but his eyes followed the hand idly heaping up autumn gold, a white, slim hand, smoothly fascinating. Then the little, restless hand swept near to his, almost touching it; and then instinctively he took it in his own, curiously, lifting it a little to consider its nearer

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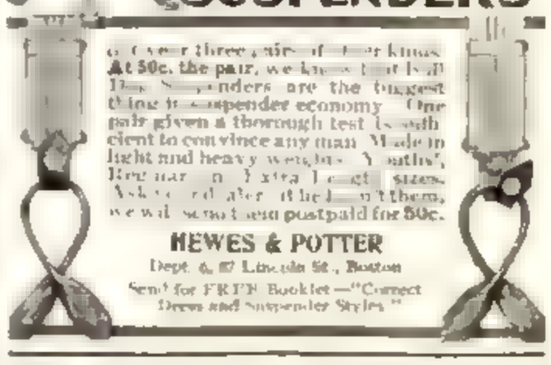

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loveliness. Perhaps it was the unexpectedness of it, perhaps it was sheer amazement, that left her hand lying idly relaxed like a white-petaled blossom in his. His bearing, too, was so blankly impersonal that for a moment the whole thing appeared inconsequent. Then, as her hand lay there, scarcely imprisoned, their eyes encountered—and hers, intensely blue now, considered him without emotion, studied him impersonally without purpose, incuriously acquiescent, indifferently expectant.

After a little while the consciousness of the contact disconcerted her; she withdrew her fingers with an involuntary shiver.

"Is there no chance?" he asked.

Perplexed with her own emotion, the meaning of his low-voiced question at first escaped her; then, like its own echo, it came ringing back in her ears, reëchoed again as he repeated it:

"Is there no chance for me, Miss Landis?"

The very revulsion of self-possession returning chilled her; then anger came, quick and hot; then pride. She deliberated, choosing her words coolly enough: "What chance do you mean, Mr. Siward?"

"A fighting chance. Can you give it to me?"

"A fighting chance? For what?" Her voice was very low, very dangerous.

"For you."

Then, in spite of her, her senses became unsteady; a sudden ringing confusion seemed to deafen her, through which his voice, as if very far away, sounded again:

"Men who are worth a fighting chance ask for it sometimes—but take it always. I take it."

Her pallor faded under the flood of bright color; the blue of her eyes darkened ominously to velvet.

"Mr. Siward," she said, very distinctly and slowly, "I am not—even—sorry—for you."

"Then my chance is desperate indeed," he retorted coolly.

"Chance! Do you imagine ——" Her anger choked her.

"Are you not a little hard?" he said, paling under his tan. "I supposed women dismissed men more gently—even such a man as I am."

For a full minute she strove to comprehend.

"Such a man as you!" she repeated vaguely; "you mean ——" A crimson wave dyed her skin to the temples and she leaned toward him in horror-stricken contrition. "I didn't mean *that*, Mr. Siward! I—I never thought of that! It had no weight; it was not in my thoughts. I meant only that you had assumed what is unwarranted—that you—your question humiliated me, knowing that I am engaged—knowing me so little—so ——"

"Yes, I knew everything. Ask yourself why I risk everything to say this to you. There can be only one answer."

Then, after a long silence: "Have I ever"—she began tremblingly—"ever by word or look ——"

"No."

"Have I even ——"

"No. I've simply discovered how I feel. That's what I was dreaming about when you asked me. I was afraid I might do this too soon; but I meant to do it anyway, before it became too late."

"It was too late from the very moment we met, Mr. Siward." And, as he reddened painfully again, she added quickly: "I mean that I had already decided. *Why* will you take what I say so dreadfully different from the way I intend it? Listen to me: I—I believe I am not very experienced yet; I was a-stonished—quite stunned for a moment. Then it hurt me—and I said that I was not sorry for you. . . . I *am* sorry, now."

And, as he said nothing: "You were a little rough, a little sudden with me, Mr. Siward. Men have asked me that question—several times; but never so soon, so unreasonably soon—never without some preliminary of some sort, so that I could foresee, be more or less prepared. . . . But you gave me *no* warning. I—if you had, I would have known how to be gentle. I—I wish to be now. I like you—enough to say this to you, enough seriously to be sorry; if I could bring myself really to believe this—feeling ——"

Still he said nothing; he sat there listlessly studying the sun-spots glowing, waxing, waning on the carpet of dead leaves at his feet.

"As for—what you have said," she added, a little smile curving the sensitive mouth,

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He raised his head, considering her, forcing the smile to meet her own.

"We shall be better friends than ever," she asserted confidently.

"Yes, better than ever."

"Because what you have done means the nicest sort of friendship, you see. You can't escape its duties and responsibilities now, Mr. Siward. I shall expect you to spend the greater part of your life in devotedly doing things for me. Besides, I am now privileged to worry you with advice. Oh, you have invested me with all sorts of powers now!"

He nodded.

She sprang to her feet, flushed, smiling, a trifle excited.

"Is it *all* over, and are we the very ideals of friends?" she asked.

"The very ideals."

"You *are* nice!" she said impulsively, holding out both gloveless hands. He held them, she looking at him, very sweetly, very confidently.

"*Allons!* Without malice?" she asked.

"Without malice."

"Without afterthoughts?"

"Without afterthoughts."

"And—you are content?" persuasively.

"Of course not," he said.

"Oh, but you must be!"

"I must be," he repeated obediently.

"And you are! Say it!"

"But it does not make me unhappy not to be contented ——"

"Say it, please; or—do you desire me to be unhappy?"

Her small, smooth hands lying between his, they stood confronting one another in the golden light. She might have brought the matter to an end; and why she did not she knew no more than a kitten waking to consciousness under its first caress.

"Say it," she repeated, laughing uncertainly back into his smiling eyes of a boy.

"Say what?"

"That you are contented."

"I can't."

"Mr. Siward, it is unkind; it is shameless ——"

"I know it; I am that sort."

"Then I am sorry for you. Look at that!" turning her left hand in his so that the jewel on the third finger caught the light.

"I see it."

"And yet ——"

"And yet."

"That," she observed with composure, "is sheer obstinacy. . . . Isn't it?"

"It is what I said it was: a hopeful discontent."

"How can it be?" She spoke impatiently now, for the long, unaccustomed contact was unnerving her—yet she made no motion to withdraw her hands. "How can you really care for me? Do you actually believe that—devotion—comes like that?"

"Exactly like that."

"So suddenly? It is impossible!" with a twist of her pretty shoulders.

"How did it come—to *you?*" he asked between his teeth.

Then her face grew scarlet and her eyes grew dark, and her hands contracted in his—tightened, twisted fingers entangled, until, with a little sob, she swayed toward him and he caught her. An instant, a minute—more, perhaps, she did not know—she half lay in his arms, her untaught lips cold against his. Lassitude, faint consciousness, then tiny shock on shock came the burning revulsion; and her voice came back, too, sounding strangely to her.

He had freed her; she remembered that somebody had asked him to—perhaps herself. That was well; she needed to breathe, to summon strength and commonsense, find out what had been done, what reasonless madness she had committed in the half-light of the silver-stemmed trees clustering in shameful witness on every hand.

Suddenly the hot humiliation of it overwhelmed her, and she covered her face with her hands, standing, almost swaying, as wave on wave of incredulous shame seemed to sweep her from knee to brow. That phase passed after a while; out of it she emerged, flushed, outwardly composed, into another phase, in full self-possession once more, able to understand what had happened without the disproportion of emotional exaggeration. After all, she had only been kissed. Besides, she was a novice, which probably accounted, in a measure, for the unreasonable emotion coincident with a caress to which she was unaccustomed. Without looking up at him, she found herself saying coolly enough to surprise herself:

"I never supposed I was capable of that. It appears that I am. I haven't anything to say for myself . . . except that I feel fearfully humiliated. . . . Don't say anything now. . . . I do not blame you, truly I do not. It was contemptible of me—to do it—wearing this——" She stretched out her slender left hand, not looking at him. "It was contemptible!" . . . She slowly raised her eyes, summoning all her courage to face him.

But he only saw in the pink confusion of her lovely face the dawning challenge of a coquette saluting her adversary in gay acknowledgment of his fleeting moment of success. And as his face fell, then hardened into brightness, instantly she divined how he rated her, and in a flash realized her weapons and her security, and that the situation was hers, not in the control of this irresolute young man who stood so silently considering her. Strange that she should be ashamed of her own innocence, willing that he believe her accomplished in such arts, enchanted that he no longer perhaps suspected genuine emotion in the swift, confused sweetness of her first kiss. If only all that were truly hidden from him, if he dare not in his heart convict her of anything save perfection in a gay, imprudent rôle, what a weight lifted, what relief, what hot self-contempt cooled! What vengeance, too, she would take on him for the agony of her awakening—the dazed chagrin, the dread of his wise, amused eyes—eyes that she feared had often looked upon such scenes; eyes no doubt familiar with such unimportant details as the shamed demeanor of a novice.

"Why do you take it so seriously?" she said, laughing and studying him, certain now of herself in this new disguise.

"Do you take it lightly?" he asked, striving to smile.

"I? Ah, I must, you know. You don't expect to marry me, . . . do you, Mr. Siward?"

"I——" He choked up at that, grimly for a while.

Walking slowly forward together, she fell into step frankly beside him, near him—too near. "Try to be sensible," she was saying gayly. "I like you so much—and it would be horrid to have you mope, you know. And besides, even if I cared for you, there are reasons, you know—reasons for any girl to marry the man I am going to marry. Does my cynicism shock you? What am I to do? Such marriages are reasonable, and far likelier to be agreeable than when fancy is the sole motive—certainly far more agreeable than an ill-considered yielding to abstract emotion with nothing concrete in view. . . . So, you see, I could not marry you even if I——" (her voice was inclined to tremble, but she controlled it. *Would* she never learn her rôle?) "—even if I loved you——"

Then her tongue stumbled and was silent; and they walked on, side by side, through the fading splendor of the year, exchanging no further speech.

Toward sunset their guide hailed them, standing high among the rocks, a silhouette against the sky. And beyond him they saw the poles crowned with the huge nests of the fish-hawks, marking the last rendezvous at Osprey Ledge.

She turned to him as they started up the last incline, thanking him in a sweet, natural voice for his care of her—quite innocently—until in the questioning, unconvinced gaze that met hers she found her own eyes softening and growing dim; and she looked away suddenly, lest he read her ere she had dared turn the first page in the book of self—ere she had studied, pried, probed among the pages of a new chapter whose familiar title, so long meaningless to her, had taken on a sudden troubling significance. And for the first time in her life she glanced uneasily at the new page in the book of self, numbered according to her years with the figures 23, and headed with the unconvincing chapter-title, "Love."

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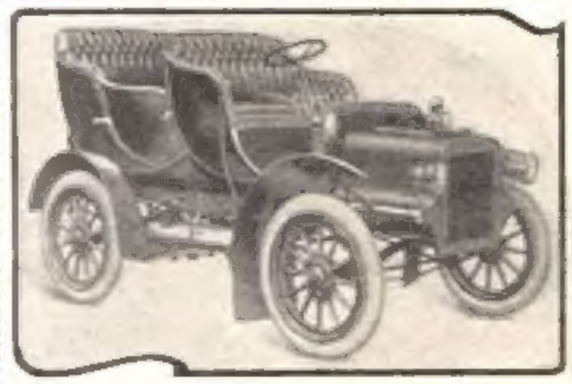

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Every cent you pay for Reach sporting goods brings you a full cent's worth of real value. The Reach guarantee is back of every ball ($1 or more), mitt or glove (any price) and if they turn out defective in any way you get a new one. We pay the cost of mail or expressage. Many sensational one-hand catches are possible with the Reach glove—the ball sticks right in the hollow.

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Fielders' Gloves 25c to $3
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Insist upon getting Reach goods, and notify us if your dealer can't supply you.

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A. J. Reach Co., 1705 Tulip St., Philadelphia

Reach

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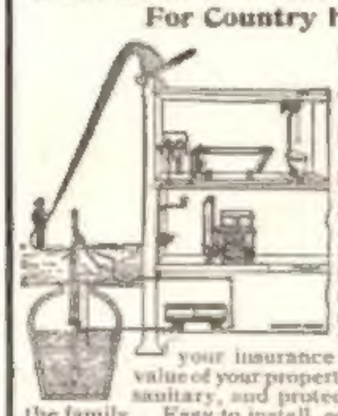

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